HMS

BELFAST

POCKET MANUAL

ROYAL NAVY

OSPREY

HMS BELFAST

POCKET MANUAL

Compiled and introduced by
Lt Cdr John Blake FRIN RN

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Her Majesty's Ship *Belfast*
Pennant Number C35

INTRODUCTION

Today, HMS *Belfast* is an important example of our nation's cultural heritage. She is moored in the heart, in the Pool, of London, positioned close by those other hallmarks of British history, the Tower of London and Tower Bridge – a fact that reflects her significance. Visited by more than 250,000 people every year, she represents for the Imperial War Museum the role of the Royal Navy in our history. Here, we explore the fascinating story of both her commissioned life and her preservation.

The many people who have been associated with the ship in their very different ways, and who have contributed to this pocket manual, reflected that she was a 'happy ship' – an accolade not bestowed on every vessel. In accordance with this, rather than being a dry work of reference the book seeks to describe both the important strategic environment in which HMS *Belfast* was procured and operated and the spirit of the ship, which led to her being preserved as a representative of the Royal Navy. Compiled from original material and documents of the time, the pocket manual catalogues the ship from her launch in 1938 at Harland and Wolff (the same shipyard as the RMS *Titanic)* and her equipment and operation through to her role in a variety of naval operations during her eventful 25-year career and, latterly, her current role as a museum ship.

I, too, during my time in the Royal Navy, came to regard the ship in which I served with affection. Although perhaps prima facie this regard may seem unexpected to civilians, the sentiment is something, possibly created by the atmosphere that a ship emanates once commissioned, that most sailors experience. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that ships are called 'she', and have been for centuries, and HMS *Belfast* is no exception to this tradition.

Historically, the term *cruizer* (sic) traces back to the 18th century and referred to an 18-gun ship of the brig-sloop class of the Royal Navy. This was the same as a ship-sloop except for the rigging, with only a foremast and mainmast, while a ship-sloop was rigged

with three masts. More cruizers were built by the British during the Napoleonic Wars, with 110 vessels constructed to this design, making the cruizer (or cruiser as it came to be known, although the innovating and energetic reformer of the Royal Navy, AF Jacky Fisher, spelt it cruizer as late as 1900) the second-most numerous class of sailing warship built to a single design for any navy at any time.

The function of the early cruizers for the fleet was not dissimilar to that of the cruiser of the 1930s. The cruiser class of the first half of the 20th century denoted a ship capable of independent employment on a foreign station. This required its crew to have the ability to make running repairs and have a large radius of action. Looking within this overarching role of the cruiser there was a multifunctional aspect: to be a scout for a fleet of battleships (and later aircraft carriers); to be on hand to provide firepower to deter colonial trouble in the British Empire as well as to protect trade interests; to be available to protect principally Britain's merchant shipping fleet worldwide; and, during peacetime, to maintain and extend Britain's influence around the world by 'showing the flag'.

Described by AF Jacky Fisher as 'eggshells armed with sledgehammers', before the advent of radio large numbers of cruisers were needed for trade protection, for convoys or at merchant shipping focal points around the world. However, the arrival of radio, and later radar – which was introduced into HMS *Belfast* just before World War II – profoundly changed the way cruisers were able to operate and the number of cruisers needed by the Royal Navy was considerably reduced thereby.

The difficulty for Britain in the late 19th century was that, while potential enemies (viz, Russia, Germany and France) could build relatively small numbers of cruisers to provide a threat and to attack trade shipping, Britain needed huge numbers to beat off potential attackers and had to position them wherever an attack might be possible. What's more, the financial burden on the Empire could be the winning factor for her enemies: what the French at the time called *la guerre industrielle* – an economic war – which, it was thought, would make Britain bankrupt. Radio changed all that and allowed for a smaller number of cruisers to be vectored to points at which there might be trouble.

The cruiser role of protecting the Empire was entwined with the dominance of Britain as the financial centre of the world. Not only did

the overseas colonies and dominions need trade protection for what has been called the 'formal Empire', but the 'informal Empire' did too. This latter category was made up of many countries worldwide that favoured trade with Britain because of the implicit acceptance that Britain would protect their free trade. This created a self-serving situation that benefitted both Britain and her trading partners. Trade followed the flag. China was an important example and this explains why the Royal Navy kept a large and expensive fleet throughout the inter-war years – one that was far larger than that of any other country with Asian interests. The cruiser, with powerful guns, a strong detachment of marines and good command and control facilities on board, answered the needs of colonial and informal Empire protection. Kuwait, for example, was saved from Saudi attack in 1921 and Iraqi attack in 1961 (albeit with a carrier force).

After World War I various treaties were signed by the dominant powers: Great Britain, the USA, Germany, Italy and Japan. The Washington Naval Treaty, concluded on 26 February 1922 by the victorious powers of World War I, limited cruisers to 10,000 tons' displacement with maximum 8in. guns, but without restriction on numbers. Japan and the USA built to this limit, but the Royal Navy cruisers of the Kent, Norfolk and London classes were relatively too expensive and too big for the task and the York class of 8,000 tons was built. The London Naval Treaty of 1930 superceded the earlier Washington Naval Treaty and was itself superceded by a further London Naval Treaty in 1936, which tried again to limit the naval arms race while allowing the USA and Britain naval parity. The Town class was the outcome, with a size limitation of 10,000 tons and bearing 6in. guns – a class that featured HMS *Southampton*, which was laid down in November 1934.

At that time, British warship designers consistently sought to minimise weight, which was associated with cost, deciding on length and space requirements later in the design. These changed with the advent of World War II and the rapid advance in radar and wireless equipment, since there was now a need for anti-aircraft guns and internal space for increased electric power, which added significantly to top weight. However, it was known that the Japanese were not adhering to any size limitations in their naval construction programme and were building much heavier ships.

HMS *Belfast*'s capture in 1939 of the German merchant ship C*ap Norte* (*Belfast*'s crew included the future AF Lord Terence Lewin, then a midshipman in charge of the boat that carried the capturing boarding party); her enduring performance guarding and supporting merchant ships of the Arctic Convoys to Russia; her role in the sinking in 1943 of the German pocket battleship *Scharnhorst*; her leading role in the D-Day landings as a command and control ship, with accurate army support bombardment; her involvement in the Korean War; and subsequent flag-showing during the 1950s and 1960s, with inspirational captains such as R Adm Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles, all gave her a pedigree history that has deservedly been recognised through her preservation as a tribute to those involved with her. Her battle honours, proudly displayed today on her quarterdeck, visually and succinctly summarise this extraordinary career.

It was Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles, captain from January 1961 to July 1962 who, as MP for Winchester, so determinedly led the move to preserve HMS *Belfast* for the nation. That the Russians should pay more than £1 million for the replacement of her masts with Russian steel, completed in October 2010, is testament to the wider affection in which she is held.

The ship is open to visitors and this, along with the highly active volunteers of the HMS Belfast Association who work with the Imperial War Museum, keeps her alive. These volunteers hold meetings, commemorative services, VIP visits and, through their association magazine *The Seahorse*, keep veterans and members in touch and help to relive her past achievements through the exhibits and parts of the ship fitted out with contemporary functions on board.

She serves to remind us all of the debt we owe to the Royal Navy in protecting this island nation and that we depend on trade and food from throughout the world (with some 95 per cent coming by sea) for our survival. The Kaiser and the Nazis nearly starved Great Britain during two world wars with their U-boat campaigns and we should never let ourselves be hostage to such a situation again. As a collective tribute to the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navies she is representative of all classes of ship. Go and visit HMS *Belfast!* You will not regret it.

John Blake FRIN 2018

Chapter 1

HMS *Belfast*: From conception to launch

BATTLE HONOURS FOR HMS *BELFAST*

Ben Warlow states in the preface to Battle Honours of the Royal Navy – *the publication officially authorised to list the honours:*

'The award of Battle Honours to Her/His Majesty's ships is intended to foster esprit de corps among their officers and ships' companies who are thereby encouraged to take a personal interest in the war-time exploits not only of their present ship, but also of ships of the same name which have distinguished themselves in the past.

The Battle Honours Committee … makes recommendations for awards to the Navy Board, which will authorise any official Honours considered appropriate… If awards are made too freely, they lose much of their value… Battle Honours have generally been awarded for successful war service rather than as a record of service.'

HMS *BELFAST*'S MOTTO

'Pro tanto quid retribuamus'

Formal translation from the Latin: 'For so much, how shall we repay?'

The sailors' translation: 'We give as good as we get.'

The motto is taken from the Latin Vulgate Bible, Psalm 116, Verse 12. There have been many varying translations.

HMS *BELFAST*'S ENSIGN

HMS *Belfast* is especially permitted to fly the White Ensign, normally flown by Royal Navy ships in active commission.

HMS *BELFAST*'S BADGE

Field – Blue

Badge – Upon waves in base white and blue, a sea horse gorged with a mural crown proper.

The badge of BELFAST – the blazon, or technical description, is occasionally provided by the College of Arms with the Sealed Pattern, but not always; and of course, blazons can vary. It should be an accurate technical description, from which a heraldic artist could draw a similarly accurate and acceptable version of the badge.

The *Belfast* badge is in the card index of the SNBC records, and is therefore the version dating from the creation of the badge in 1937. The sea horse and mural crown proper may not be immediately obvious in terms of colours, but the proper colour of a crown of any variety is normally gold, and that is how the mural crown is depicted in the arms of BELFAST and on the Sealed Pattern. The proper colour of a mythological creature is distinctly more awkward, but for the sea horse generally seems to have been primarily a fishy silver, which often tends to a greenish colour – a herald would not usually put green on blue, since it does not show up well.

HMS *BELFAST*'S CREST

Cdr Ferguson (RN, FI, Mech E) recounts how the original design was conceived:

'I recall that the ship was without a crest before the launch, being the first *Belfast* ever (Job No 1000) and that, having the skeleton of a seahorse I picked up on the shores of Lake Avernus (shades of Agrippa), this idea of a crest was born; particularly as the seahorse

appears also in the crest of the City of Belfast. My drawing was passed from the Admiralty to the College of Heralds who arranged the red gorged crown for the seahorse and presumably had it redrawn; I had a letter back from the Admiralty informing me that the design was accepted with this minor modification. On Trafalgar Day, 1971, I had the seahorse with me and gave it to the admiral.'

HMS *BELFAST*'S BELL

The following letter from the First Lord of the Admiralty gives details of the specification of *Belfast*'s bell.

The First Lord of the Admiralty
Whitehall Gardens
London
17 January 1938

Town Clerk
Belfast

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 3rd December 1937 concerning the presentation of a silver bell and flags to H.M.S. BELFAST by the city of Belfast, I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to inform you that the presentation bell would be for use as well as ornament and would take the place of the ship's bell which would ordinarily be provided.

2. The specification for H.M.S. BELFAST provides for a "watch bell of Service Pattern and size with the ship's name legibly engraved or cast thereon" and is to be of the following dimensions:-

Inside diameter . . . . . 19"

Inside height . . . . . 16"

Weight . . . . . 148 lbs. (excluding weight of clapper which should be 1/17th of the weight of the bell).

A drawing of the bell is enclosed.

3. My Lords would be glad if they could be consulted concerning the design of any devices which the City Council may desire to have engraved on the bell.

HMS *BELFAST*'S IDENTIFICATION

Visual and radio call signs

International call signs and visual signal letters for all Royal Navy ships were noted in the Signal Department, Admiralty reference O.U. 5516/40. *Belfast*'s visual signal letter group is GGCN and her sister ship HMS *Edinburgh* was GGCP. (Information kindly supplied by the Curator, HMS *Collingwood* Heritage Collection (CHC).)

Today the book used is *ACP 113 (Allied Communications Publications) Call Sign Book for Ships*. The Sponsoring Authority for all ACPs is the Combined Communications-Electronics Board (CCEB), which is comprised of the five member nations: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA.

A ship's international call sign and radio call sign are the same, e.g. for *Belfast* GGCN.

However, the visual call sign of a ship is her pennant number. Currently *Belfast* has a pennant number of C35, which was issued post 1948 when the Admiralty rationalised pennant numbers by allocating a Flag Superior letter to denote the type of ship, e.g. C = Cruiser. Prior to 1948 Flag Superiors weren't used and records held at the HMS *Collingwood* Heritage Collection show her pennant number as C35 and her sister ship *Edinburgh*'s as C16.

CONCEPT AND RAISON D'ÊTRE FOR A CRUISER IN THE ROYAL NAVY IN THE 1930S

The need for a cruiser was outlined in various Admiralty papers and the abstracts below give the arguments that were put at the time. That thinking matured into the cruiser designs that eventually became HMS *Belfast* as laid down in 1938. The keynote factors were versatility to act as an independent warship; being strong and speedy enough to protect merchant shipping and trade routes; to be protected by armour plating against a battleship's shells but speedy enough to outrun a battleship to fight another day; impressive enough to 'show the flag' when Britain's Empire and dependant countries would experience some of the personality of the mother country and help foster trading relations with other countries. Their design, however, had to be frameworked within the Treaties of Washington in 1922 and London in 1930.

*Captain Arthur W. Wheeler RN wrote a five-*page *article in the Number One issue of the 1986* Imperial War Museum Review *on the raison d'être for cruisers in the Royal Navy, titled 'The Provenance of a Warship', of which the following is an extract.*

"War in the Far East is the basis on which our preparations are to be made."

Cabinet decision quoted in a Naval Staff paper dated 28 October 1926.

The surrender of the German High Seas Fleet in 1918 and the restrictions later imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, effectively removed what, until then, had been the principal threat to British maritime supremacy. On this premise alone, *substantial cuts* could safely be made in the strength of the Navy. The Government of the time, faced with an exhausted economy, sought to take advantage of this, but the Empire remained as great a strategic burden as ever and its existence depended on an immense volume of seaborne trade. New concerns for the defence of that trade soon began to emerge.

In naval terms, Anglo-American relations were uneasy. During the War the subordination of American warships to British overall command had only been accomplished with difficulty. After the Armistice, there was much disagreement about the disposal of the

German Fleet, which only ended when the interned crews solved the problem by scuttling their ships. More generally, there was an undercurrent of resentment in the USA against the very existence of the British Empire and against the naval supremacy which Britain had hitherto maintained to defend it. A powerful lobby in the USA advocated building a navy which was "second to none", in other words at least equal to the British.

Britain had been brought close to defeat not through battle fleet encounters but by massive destruction of her merchant shipping by submarine and surface attack. [Ships to counter this] needed to be able to steam long distances without refuelling. They needed a powerful gun armament, good sea-keeping qualities to provide a stable gun platform, some armoured protection and a high maximum speed. The class of ship which most clearly approached this most exacting combination was the cruiser. More traditionally designed to act in support of the main fleet, it came increasingly to be seen through British eyes as the principal means of trade protection, and successive British cruiser designs were to reflect this trend.

On the poacher/gamekeeping principle, the cruiser was also regarded as the type of warship best suited to commerce raiding, so British cruiser designers had also to take account of the equivalent designs of potential enemies and ensure that, if possible, British ships would at least equal their likely adversaries.

The central aim of naval policy is to prepare for war. In the 1920s the primary objective of British foreign policy was disarmament and the abolition of war. To this extent the two were in opposition and because naval policy was necessarily subordinate to foreign policy, the Naval Staff were sometimes obliged to settle for new warship designs which diverged appreciably from those dictated by purely naval considerations.

This led to the development of the 10,000 ton, 8" gun county class cruisers, 13 of which were to join the Fleet between 1928 and 1931. At the 1920 Washington Conference it was agreed that the relative numbers of British, American and Japanese capital ships were to be in the ratio 5:5:3. To many Japanese, the acceptance of the lower ratio represented a slight to their national prestige and this grievance grew in the years following the Conference.

The London Naval Treaty was due to expire in 1936 and in 1935 the second London Naval Conference met to decide what should succeed it. The Japanese, having already publicly denounced the Washington Treaty, proposed a "common upper limit". The Japanese proposal won no support and their delegation withdrew from the Conference. The class of Japanese cruisers described in the Admiralty letter was named Mogami after the first ship to be built. Compared with these fifteen gunships, the British Leanders mounted only eight guns, and the Arethusas only six. The guns in these British ships were mounted in twin gun turrets, but by the early 1930s a new mounting carrying three guns had been developed.

Anxious to order the ships in the 1936 programme the Admiralty decided to abandon the quadruple mounting and fit the standard triple turrets instead. The weight thus saved was used to increase the armour protection. So the final design was settled with a main armament similar to *Southampton*, but with more anti-aircraft guns and a larger fuel capacity.

After an eventful wartime career in Atlantic, Arctic and home waters, she sailed to join the British Pacific Fleet for what promised to be a long campaign against Japan.

That campaign never took place. The atomic bombs were dropped, Japan surrendered, and *Belfast* was never to encounter the adversary which had so concerned her designers.

HMS *Belfast* was an improved version, along with HMS *Edinburgh*, of ten light cruisers of the 'Town' class and was ordered from Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast with the Yard number 1000 on 21 September 1936, and laid down on 10 December 1936.

They had four improved triple gun turrets with 6in. guns and armour plate fitted to the sides and deck. Four Admiralty pattern three-drum boilers set in separate boiler rooms, two side by side forward and one astern the other in the after space, produced steam that drove high- and low-pressure Parsons turbine engines, along with a cruising turbine in each system, driven respectively by high- and low-pressure steam. These turned the ship's four propellers. Commanding officers were to find her delightfully responsive to manoeuvre.

The fitting out for her first commission included water pumps, air compressors, water-distilling machinery, electric generators,

refrigeration, ventilation, capstans for the anchors and crane engines, galley ranges, even cabin radiators – the whole panoply required for a crew of some 800 to operate and live within this warship.

Ships in the Royal Navy at that time, including HMS *Belfast*, were designed by the Department of Naval Constructors, headed by the Director of Naval Construction (DNC), while machinery was the responsibility of the Engineer-in-Chief (E-in-C) and ordnance the Director of Naval Ordnance (DNO), and a separate Department of Electrical Engineering was created in the inter-war period. An anti-submarine Directorate, concerned with Asdic (now Sonar) and torpedoes, and a Naval Air department were created. All these departments produced specifications that were then included in the final construction plans.

Constructors' notebooks are now kept in the National Maritime Museum's Brass Foundry, and Ships Covers in The National Archives, which make it possible to reconstruct all British cruiser designs prepared between 1920 and up to the last missile cruiser in 1956. This of Sir Charles S. Lillicrap, head of cruiser design in the late 1930s and later DNC: 'The key design tool was the summary weight breakdown typically included in the Legend, the summary of ship characteristics presented to decision-makers'. Typically, the designer began with a target weight and with demands for particular armament, protection and speed. Displacement, based on the weight of these factors suggested overall dimensions of the ship based also on previous experience. The constructor added these factors and calculated them from the overall allowable (by treaty) weight to decide how much protection weight to give, which was built to cover the hull belt and deck over the machinery, along with boxes for the magazines' shell rooms. In practice, this method of ship design worked because DNC split his organisation into sections, which included one for cruisers, rather than the US method of one department designing one aspect for all classes of ship.

Policy, including ship requirements, was decided by the Board of Admiralty, which included the First Sea Lord, operational chief of the Royal Navy and Naval Staff, and who was involved

in decisions concerning material; his deputy, the Second Sea Lord (with additional responsibility for personnel); the Third Sea Lord (Controller); Fourth Sea Lord for logistics; and Fifth Sea Lord for fleet aircraft.

Elsewhere, storm clouds were gathering in Europe with the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39.

Against this political and geographical background the purpose of HMS *Belfast*'s genesis and design was decided, and her construction could begin. The decision to choose her name, however, was more than mere whimsy – naming the Town class after (anomalously) cities revealed ulterior motives that could provide a spawning ground for recruitment, elicit ship loyalty and achieve adoption by the city. This was a clever ploy that worked well for both the *Edinburgh* and the *Belfast*.

The Treaty of Versailles of 1919 stated in its Article 181 that the German naval forces in commission could not exceed six battleships, six light cruisers, 12 destroyers and 12 torpedo boats, while Article 190 limited the displacement of capital ships to 10,000 tons. On 6 February 1922, the USA, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan signed the Washington Naval Treaty. Under the terms of this treaty, the five major naval powers agreed to limit the standard displacement of their capital ships to 35,000 tons (35,560 metric tons), and the calibre of their heavy guns to 16in.. The total capital ship standard tonnage was distributed as follows:

- USA 525,000 tons (533,400 metric tons)
- British Empire 525,000 tons (533,400 metric tons)
- France 175,000 tons (177,800 metric tons)
- Italy 175,000 tons (177,800 metric tons)
- Japan 315,000 tons (320,040 metric tons)

The London Naval Conference of January–April 1930 was intended to review the Washington Naval Treaty, but France and Italy refused to ratify it because of the low battleship tonnage ratios they were assigned.

In the early 1930s, German naval shipbuilding was still restricted by the Treaty of Versailles, and it was not until 18 June 1935, when Britain's Foreign Minister Sir Samuel Hoare and the German Ambassador Joachim von Ribbentrop signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in London, that its restrictions were finally lifted. Germany was then allowed to build a surface fleet numbering up to 35 per cent of that of Britain, and up to 45 per cent in the case of submarines. This meant that Germany could now build 184,000 tons of battleships – in other words, five 35,000-ton battleships. Between December 1935 and March 1936 the five major powers met again in London. Japan withdrew from the conference since her demands for parity with the USA and the British Empire in capital ship tonnage were not met. So, an escalator clause was added, and allowed countries to build battleships of up to 45,000 tons in case a non-signatory power were suspected of building ships outside the treaty limits. Since Italy and Japan did not sign the treaty, the standard displacement of 45,000 tons was understood to be acceptable by the other powers, including Germany.

Table showing comparisons of Battleship and Cruiser construction of principal maritime nations in 1930s

Great Britain.			
King George V . .	Laid down, 1.1.37.	35,000 tons,	14-in. guns.
Prince of Wales . .	Laid down, 1.1.37.	35,000 tons,	14-in. guns.
3 ships . . .	To be laid down, 1937.	35,000 tons,	—
United States.			
2 ships . . .	Ordered, 1.1.37.	35,000 tons,	16-in. guns.

Japan.			
4 ships . .	Projected, one or two to be laid down, 1937.	35,000 tons,	(Probably 16-in.)
France.			
Dunkerque . .	Laid down, 1932.		
	Launched, 1935.		
	Completed, 1936.	26,500 tons,	13-in. guns.
Strasbourg . .	Laid down, 1934.		
	Launched, 1936.		
Richelieu . . .	Laid down, 1935.	35,000 tons,	15-in. guns.
Jean Bart . . .	Laid down, 1937.		
Germany.			
Scharnhorst . .	Laid down, 1934.	26,000 tons,	11-in. guns.
Gneisenau . .	Launched, 1936.		
1 ship "F" . . .	Laid down, 1936.	35,000 tons,	14-in. guns.
1 ship . . .	To be laid down, 1937.		
Italy.			
Vittorio Veneto .	Laid down, 1934.	35,000 tons,	15-in. guns.
Littorio . .			

The following table summarises the cruiser activity of the six principal Powers during 1936: —

Cruisers Completed During 1936.

Great Britain.	United States.	Japan.	France.	Italy.	Germany.
Amphion	Quincy	Suzuya	Jean de	E. di Savoia	—
Apollo			Vienne		
Penelope					
3	1	1	1	1	—

Cruisers Launched During 1936.

Aurora	Vincennes	Kumano	Georges	G. Garibaldi.	—
Southampton	Brooklyn		Leygues	D. d. Abruzzi.	
Newcastle	Philadelphia				
Glasgow	Savannah				
Birmingham	Nashville				
Sheffield					
6	5	1	1	2	—

Cruisers Continued (but not Launched) during 1936.					
—	Wichita	Tone	Gloire	—	"G"
	Phœnix	Tikuma	Marseillaise		"H"
	Boise		Montcalm		
	Honolulu				
—	4	2	3	—	2
Cruisers Laid Down During 1936.					
Liverpool	Helena	—	—	—	"J"
Manchester	St. Louis				
Gloucester					
Belfast					
Edinburgh					
5	2	—	—	—	1
8-in. Gun Ships.					

HMS *Belfast*'s specifications 1939

Length overall:	613ft 6in
Beam:	63ft 4in
Displacement (during trials):	10,420 tons
Draught:	17ft 3in
Shaft horse power:	80,000 (300rpm)
Speed:	32.5kts
Oil fuel capacity:	2400 tons
Armament:	12–6in in triple turrets
	12–4in HA/LA in twin mountings
	16–2pdr AA in 8-barrelled mountings
	8–0.5in AA in quadruple mountings
	6–21in torpedo tubes in triple mounting
	15 Mk VII depth charges
Aircraft:	2 or 3 Supermarine Walrus amphibians
Armour:	
Main belt:	4½in NC
Bulkheads:	2½in NC
Decks:	3in NC (over magazines). 2in NC (over machinery)
Weights:	
General equipment:	560 tons
Armament:	1265 tons
Armour:	1790 tons
Hull:	4725 tons
Machinery:	1435 tons
Aircraft equipment:	120 tons
Refrigerating machinery and lubricating oil:	105 tons
Total:	10,000 tons

Captains of HMS *Belfast* – 1939 to 1963

5.8.39–4.1.40	Captain G.A. Scott, D.S.O., R.N.
3.11.42–28.7.44	Captain F.R. Parham, D.S.O., R.N.
29.7.44–8.7.46	Captain R.M. Dick, C.B.E., D.S.C., R.N.
9.7.46–20.11.47	Captain H.B. Ellison, D.S.O., R.N.
22.9.48–7.4.50	Captain E.K. Le Mesurier, M.V.O., R.N.
8.4.50–22.11.51	Captain Sir Aubrey St. Clair-Ford, Bt., D.S.O., R.N.
23.11.51–26.11.52	Captain A.C. Duckworth, D.S.C., G.M., R.N.
12.5.59–30.1.61	Captain J.V. Wilkinson, D.S.C., G.M., R.N.
31.1.61–1.7.62	Captain M.C. Morgan-Giles, D.S.O., O.B.E., G.M., R.N.
2.7.62–15.8.62	Captain M.G.R. Lumby, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.
16.8.62–7.2.63	Captain W.R.D. Gerard-Pearse, M.V.O., R.N.
16.7.63–24.8.63	Captain H.C.J. Shand, D.S.C., R.N.

Flag officers who flew their flag in HMS *Belfast* – 1939 to 1963

1943	Vice Admiral Sir Robert Burnett K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.
1944	Vice Admiral F.H.G. Dalrymple-Hamilton C.B.
1945–1946	Rear Admiral R.M. Servaes C.B.E.
1946–1947	Vice Admiral Sir Denis Boyd K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.C.
1948–1949	Vice Admiral A.C.G. Madden C.B., C.B.E. Admiral Sir Patrick Brind K.C.B., C.B.E.
1950–1951	Rear Admiral W.G. Andrewes C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.
1951–1952	Rear Admiral A.K. Scott-Moncrieff C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.*
1959–1960	Vice Admiral V.C. Begg C.B., D.S.O., D.S.C.
1961–1962	Rear Admiral M. Le Fanu C.B., D.S.C. Rear Admiral J.B. Frewen C.B.
1962	Vice Admiral J.G. Hamilton C.B. D.S.C.
1963	Rear Admiral F.R. Twiss C.B.,C.B.E. Rear Admiral H.C. Martell C.B., C.B.E.

HMS *BELFAST*'S LAUNCH

HMS *Belfast* was ordered from Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast, Number 1000, on 21 September 1936 and her keel laid down on 10 December 1936. Her prestigious launch by the wife of the then Prime Mister Neville Chamberlain on 17 March 1938 (appropriately, St Patrick's Day) provided an impetus and focus of local interest and adoption, exemplified in the presentation by the Belfast City Council dignitaries of a magnificent silver ship's bell. Her subsequent career as a major member of the Royal Navy, however, proved the worth of her loyalty by the city and her succeeding crews. After fitting out and builders' trials she was commissioned into the Royal Navy on 5th August 1939 under the command of Capt G. A. Scott DSO RN. Of her budgeted cost of £2,141,514 the improved triple-turret guns cost £75,000 and the two Supermarine Walrus aircraft cost £66,500.

Mrs Neville Chamberlain launched HMS Belfast *on St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1938, breaking the traditional bottle of champagne across the bows with the words 'God bless her and all who sail in her'.*

EQUIPMENT

Summary of machinery

Boilers
Four Admiralty 3-drum with superheaters and air preheaters.

Main engines
Four Parson's-type geared turbines made by Harland and Wolff, designed to produce 80,000shp.

Gear ratios:	High pressure	11·2 to 1
	Low pressure	8·03 to 1
Cruisers to high pressure		2·77 to 1

Evaporators
Two twin-shell evaporators by G. & J. Weir (6 tons/hour). One auxiliary single shell.

Auxiliary machinery
Three turbo generators by W. H. Allen (350kW).
Two diesel generators by Paxman (230kW).
Four high-pressure air compressors.
Two low-pressure air compressors.
One Vao air-conditioning plant.
One diesel generator by G. C. E. (400kW).

Fuel expenditure and range – six months out of dock, temperate waters; four boilers, four shafts

Speed	Revs	Fuel expended tons/hour	Miles Range
10	88	4·1	5,380
11	96	4·5	5,390
12	104	4·9	5,400

Speed	Revs	Fuel expended tons/hour	Miles Range
13	112	5·3	5,420
14	120	5·6	5,500
15	128	6·1	5,400
16	138	6·6	5,333
17	146	7·1	5,270
18	154	7·6	5,202
19	164	8·7	4,807
20	174	9·6	4,583
21	184	10·7	4,325
22	194	12·0	4,040
23	204	13·2	3,840
24	214	14·8	3,570
25	224	16·4	3,355
26	236	18·6	3,080

Figures above dotted line are for cruising turbines.

Steaming arrangements

The following arrangements of engines and shafts were available:

Turbines	Boilers	Shafts	Controlling Engineroom	Use
Main	Four	Four	Forward E.R.—outer shafts After E.R.—inner shafts	Manoeuvring and pilotage
Main	Two	Two	Either Forward E.R.—outers or after E.R.—inners	Passage speeds 15 to 22 kts. required

Turbines	Boilers	Shafts	Controlling Engineroom	Use
Cruising	Two	Two	Either Forward E.R.—outers or after E.R.—inners	Economical steaming
Cruising	Two	Four	Forward E.R.—outer shafts	Passage speeds up to 20 kts
			After E.R.—inner shafts	

Summary of armament

Main armament

12 x 6in. 50-calibre breech-loading Mk XXIII guns in four triple Mk XXIII mountings. Total weight, 615 tons, plus 28 tons for the hoist. It was the main battery gun used in Royal Navy cruisers from 1930 and throughout World War II.

Secondary armament

12 x 4in. Mk XVI* quick-firing guns on six HA twin Mk XIX mountings; two after mountings removed April 1945, remainder modified to RP 50 (remote power control, again modified to RP 51 in May 1959).

QF 2-pounder Mark VIII (multi pom-pom)

The Royal Navy had identified the need for a rapid-firing, multi-barrelled close-range anti-aircraft weapon at an early stage and one that would utilise the enormous stocks of 2-pounder ammunition left over from World War I. In 1930 the **QF 2-pounder Mark VIII**, usually known as the *multiple pom-pom* and nicknamed the 'Chicago Piano' entered service for ships of cruiser and aircraft carrier size.

Saluting guns

4–3pdr Mk I (removed 1942).

Torpedoes

6–21in. Mk IV on two triple 21in. torpedo tube mountings.

AA Armament

Particulars of 1939 Primary & Secondary Armament (Gunhouses, Turrets, Fire Control Systems, Ship's Complement etc):

	2pdr	2pdr	2pdr	40mm	40mm	40mm	40mm	20mm	20mm	20mm	0.5in
Gun Mk	VIII	VIII	VIII		NI	NI/I	NI/I	IV	IV	IV	III
Mounting Mk	VIA	VII	XVI	V	III	VII	Boffin	V	III	VII	III
Type of mounting	8-barrel	quad	single	twin	single	single	single	twin	single	single	quad
1939	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
1942	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	4	–	–
1945 (May)	2	4	4	–	–	–	–	4	2	4	–
1945 (August)	2	4	4	–	3	–	2	–	–	2	–
1948	2	4	2	–	3	2	2	–	–	–	–
1959	–	–	–	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Gunhouse armament
The gunhouses were armoured as follows:

Gunhouse floor:	D quality plate
Shield, side, rear and roof:	2 in. in NC plate
Shield, front:	4 in. NC plate

Turret capabilities
Turret Capabilities: Triple Mark 23 Turrets

Elevation:	45°, elevating power or hand.
Extreme range:	at 44°—24,800 yd. with 112lb. shell
Training arcs:	120° on either side of the fore and aft line.
Rate of training:	5°/second (both training engines)
	7°/second (one training engine only). Hand training available.
Rate of fire:	8 rounds per gun per minute.
Rate of supply:	10 rounds of shell and 10 of cordite charges per minute.
Ramming:	by hand.
Breech mechanism	hand-worked.

weight of projectile:	112 lb.
weight of charge:	30 lb.
elevation:	45°
loading angle:	between 5° depression and elevation.

HA armament 1939

Twelve x 4in. quick-firing Mark XVI* guns on HA Twin Mark XIX mountings.

The close-range weapons 1939

1. Two ·5in. quadruple mountings, one on each side of the hangar top.
2. Two 8-barrelled 2-pdf quick-firing Mark VIII pom-poms on Mark VIA mountings, with cosine sights, sited at superstructure level abreast the mainmast. These mountings had originally been designed to be sited further aft but, by the Board's decision of MFO 192/36, in order to clear the blast from the 6in., the pom-poms were removed to this new position, which would inevitably be exposed to blast from the 4in. HA at high elevations.
3. Two Vickers GO (gas-operated) machine guns.

For landing parties: ten ·303 Lewis for seamen, six ·303 Bren for Royal Marines.

Main armament fire control

The Director Control Towers (DCTs)

The 6in. triple turrets were controlled from the two armoured Director Control Towers, one above the upper bridge, the other on the after superstructure.

The following personnel manned the front compartment:

Director Layer; Director Trainer; Cross Levelling Operator; Auxiliary Trainer.

The rear compartment was manned by:

Control Officer (a lieutenant-commander); Rate Officer; Spotting Officer; Inclinometer operator.

The Transmitting Station (TS)

The Main Armament Transmitting Station was sited immediately above the 4in. HA magazine and was therefore protected by the main armoured belt and by the armoured deck. In this compartment was the calculating machine – The Admiralty Fire Control Table – which converted the range and bearing received from the Director Control Towers into gun elevation and gun training. These two components were then transmitted electrically directly to the guns and turrets. At Action Stations, the TS was manned by the Royal Marines.

The Admiralty Fire Control Table (AFCT)

Centrally in the TS stood the Admiralty Fire Control Table Mark VI, No. 18, a mechanical calculating machine. Fed with data from the Fore DCT and the After DCT, the main function of the table was to produce continuous gun elevation and gun training and to transmit these readings to the turrets.

The High Angle Control System (HACS)

The 4in. HA armament was controlled by the High Angle Control System, Mark IV. The HACS Comprised:

- Two sided-HA Director Towers (HADT) on the lower bridge, forward.
- One centreline HA Director Tower on the after superstructure.
- One HA Calculating Position (HACP) forward, next to and for'd of the TS, and protected by the armoured belt.
- One HA Calculating Position, port side aft, abaft the after Engine Room and protected by the armoured belt.

Starshell and bombardment The 4in. armament was used to fire starshell in order to illuminate a surface target for the main armament.

Pom-Pom fire control The pom-pom directors were sited on each side of the after superstructure, forward of the after HACT and on shielded platforms at a level above the 44in. searchlight projectors.

Ammunition supply: main armament

6in. shell per gun:

HE, AP or SAP		200
Practice, low angle		34
high angle		2·5
Stowage:	shell	turret shell rooms
	cordite (flashless)	turret magazines
Supply:	mechanical hoists in turret trunks	

Ammunition supply: secondary armament

4in. HA shell per gun

Fused shell	250
Practice HA	65
Practice LA	4
Target smoke	4

Note: 200 4in. starshell (flashless cordite) *per ship* was the total illumination outfit, i.e. 12·5 rounds per gun.

CLOSE-RANGE WEAPONS (AA)

Pom-poms: 2,500 rounds per barrel – 40,000 rounds total.
Stowed:

(i) in pom-pom and ·5in. magazine, sited beneath the main central store, below the armoured deck and next to 'B' 6in. magazine.
(ii) belted ammunition in ready-use lockers between the mainmast tripod legs on the pom-pom gun deck.

5in. machine-guns: 2,500 rounds per barrel – 20,000 rounds total.

Vickers Gas Operated (GO) ·303in.: 5,000 rounds in pans and in small arms magazine below armoured deck and forward of the bomb room, which was adjacent to the 4in. magazine.

Lewis and Brens: variable amount of ·303in. in portable boxes in small arms magazine.

Saluting guns: landed on outbreak of hostilities

Sub-Calibre: 140 rounds per parent gun, plus 1,680 fused for practice.

Summary of fire control gear fitted throughout *Belfast*'s commissions

Main armament	
1942	6in Mk XXIII DCT
	Fore director fitted with 22ft rangefinder and Type 284 surface warning radar
	15ft rangefinder fitted to aft DCT, 4 Type 283 blind barrage directors fitted, 1 port and starboard lower bridge, 2 on 01 deck after superstructure
1945	Both 6in directors fitted with Type 274 gunnery radar
1950	22ft rangefinder removed from fore DCT
1939	Two (1 fore, 1 aft) 6in triple Mk XXIII armoured DCTs, both fitted with 15ft rangefinders. Fore director fitted with dial sight
1942	Forward director re-equipped with 22ft rangefinder and Type 284 fire control radar; 4 Mk II blind barrage directors with Type 283 radar added, 2 port and starboard lower bridge 2 on 01 deck aft superstructure
1945	Both 6in directors fitted with Type 274 fire control radar. Blind barrage directors altered to Mk III
1950	All rangefinders removed from directors
1959	Both directors up-graded and fitted with RP 40; 274 radar retained. All barrage directors removed
Secondary armament	
1939	3 HACTs with 15ft height-finders
1942	All directors fitted with Type 285 radar
1950	All height-finders removed from directors
AA Armament	
1939	2 Mk II pom-pom directors located on the after superstructure deck forward of HACT

1942	2 pom-pom directors Mk II replaced by Mk IV fitted with Type 282 radar
1945	4 additional Mk IV pom-pom directors were fitted on sponsons: 2 forward of after funnel and 2 mid-way between both funnels
1950	All replaced by tachymetric directors
1959	All HACTs and pom-pom directors removed and replaced by 8 close-range blind-fire directors fitted with Type 262 radar

Additional fire control gear

1939	Upper bridge fitted with 6 air lookout sights, 4 searchlight sights, 2 starshell sights and 2 captain's sights
1940	2 12ft rangefinders removed from lower bridge
1959	4 Type 274A lookout sights and 4 Type 275 gunnery control sights added

DEPARTMENTS ABOARD

Torpedo department

Torpedoes: Six 21in. Mark IV torpedoes were carried in the triple TR 21in. Mark IV* torpedo tubes mounted on the upper deck in the waist on each side. No spare torpedoes were carried.

Torpedo Warhead Room: Starboard side, platform deck, abreast 'X' barbette. Torpedo control sights were mounted, one on each side of upper bridge.

Searchlights 44in.: Four stabilised Mark VII searchlights, two on after control deck, two in wings of hangar top, controlled from stabilised sights at the four searchlight control positions on the upper bridge. Six air look-out sights, three each side, were abreast the S/L control positions.

Searchlights 20in.: Signalling projectors – four, two on top of for'd 40in. S/Ls, two on lower bridge.

Paravanes: Four paravanes 'S', Mark I, were used for severing the mine mooring wire.

Depth Charges: 6in. rails; spares on port quarter of quarterdeck.

The Asdic Compartment: 1939

A Type 132 set was installed.

Navigational Department: 1939

Equipment: Pitometer log Walker log for emergency use.

Type 758N Echo-sounder – Chart House D/F Set (FCI) in D/F Office. 60Khz–20Mhz.

Compasses: Two Pattern 1015 Admiralty Gyro Compasses. One Brown B Gyro Compass, in Wheel-house as stand-by steering compass.

Action Plot: ARL table in Bridge Plotting Office on lower bridge.

Propellers: Outboard turning when proceeding ahead. 11ft 3in. dia., pitch 13ft 9in. Made by J. Stone & Co. Ltd Weight: 6·82 tons.

HMS *BELFAST*'S COMPLEMENT

The ship's complement: 1939 and beyond

The ship was designed as a flagship and, on commissioning, the authorised war complement was as follows:

	Flagship	Supernumerary Accommodation available	Private ship
Wardroom	37	13	24
Gunroom	7	–	7
Warrant Officers	13	3	10
Messmen	2	2	–
CPOs and Men in enclosed messes	188	–	160

	Flagship	Supernumerary Accommodation available	Private ship
Ratings in broadside messes	634	–	580
Total	881	18	781
1953	974		930
1961	886		862
1962			
Peace complement	582		542

RAS (REPLENISHMENT AT SEA)

Using a jackstay – a strong wire connecting an RFA tanker or replenishment vessel to a warship while they steamed parallel courses 100ft (30.5m) apart, allowed refuelling and the taking on of ammunition, stores and victuals; and the transfer of the sick and mail at sea, thus precluding any necessity to do so in harbour, giving much more flexibility to commanders-in-chief and longer 'time on task'. The supporting role of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships that normally provide these essentials (fuel, stores) is of huge importance. Key to a successful transfer was knowing the heights and positions for transfer connections, and distances.

HMS *BELFAST'S* BOATS

The ship's boat complement changed throughout her life, as did her Carley float outfit, which, combined with the boats, were capable of accommodating her war complement, when she carried 30 floats.

Ships' boats not only gave practice for young officers and ratings in seamanship, but were essential as liberty boats when, for example, *Belfast* was moored to a buoy or at anchor; for inter-ship communications; to tie up to a buoy; for inter-fleet pulling and sailing regattas; and for boarding suspect vessels.

Replenishment at sea positions with particulars of rigging

RIGGING	DIMENSIONS			ALL DISTANCES ABOVE AWL			
Masts:	**1939**	**1948**	**1959**	**Masts:**	**1939**	**1948**	**1959**
Foremast:				**Foremast:**			
Lower mast	102ft. 0in.	86ft. 6in		Highest fixed part	125ft. 0in.	111ft. 0in.	
" " struts ea (2)	49ft. 6in.	47ft. 6in		Highest part including Lightning conductor	127ft. 0in.	125ft. 0in.	
Signal yard	40ft. 0in.	40ft. 0in		Highest part of D/F pole above AWL (including D/F frame coil)	144ft. 9in.	–	
Upper yard (W/T)	24ft. 2½ in	24ft. 3in.		Overall to AWL	–	–	123ft. 1⅜ in
Housing of D/F pole	6ft. 6in.						
Mainmast				**Mainmast**			
Lower mast	96ft. 3in.	79ft. 7in.		HF Part	108ft. 0in.	95ft. 0in	
" " struts ea (2)	54ft. 0in.	53ft. 0in.		Highest part of Topmast (including Lightning conductor)	119ft. 1in.		

RIGGING DIMENSIONS				ALL DISTANCES ABOVE AWL			
Masts:	**1939**	**1948**	**1959**	**Masts:**	**1939**	**1948**	**1959**
Topmast	16ft. 0in.	–		Highest part of W/T pole	–	108ft. 0in.	
W/T yard	24ft. 2½ in.	18ft. 4in.		Overall to AWL	–	–	111ft 8⅝in.
Housing of topmast	6ft. 7in.	6ft. 7in. (radar mast)					
Radar mast		19ft. 5in.					
Booms							
Lower booms 2ea	40ft. 0in.	40ft. 1in.					
Quarter booms 2ea	10ft. 6in.	10f 3in.					
Sounding booms	33ft. 6in.	33ft. 6in I2)					
D/F pole	17ft. 8⅜ in.						

CAMOUFLAGE

HMS *Belfast*'s camouflage applied during her 1945 refit followed the scheme applied by Devonport Dockyard; the 'standard light tone scheme'.

The Camouflage Directorate of the Ministry of Home Security employed artists to work out camouflage patterns to help break up the outline of a warship, although the marine artist Norman Wilkinson was credited with creating dazzle ship camouflage

Motor Boats

Type	Construction	Beam (excl rubbers)	Speed	Bhp	Weight with 2 men	Lifesaving capacity	Remarks
35ft fast motor boat (FMB)	Carvel-built hard chine	8ft 6in	17-22kts	65/100 (twin) *Vosper*	90cwt	46	3 carried; reduced to 2 in 1945 – admiral's barge
36ft motor and pulling pinnace	Clinker-built round bilge	9ft 9in	7½kts	20 *Vosper*	130cwt	76	Used for liberty men and laying stream anchor
35ft medium speed boat	Carvel-built round bilge	9ft 2in	12-13kts	72/144 (twin)	127cwt	30	Replaced 35ft FMB in 1959; 3 carried, one as admiral's barge
25ft fast motor boat	Sheer strake clinker-built; hard chine carvel-built	6ft 9in	17-23kts	65/100	45cwt	30	1 carried port side of after funnel until 1952

25ft motor cutter	Clinker round bilge	7ft 8in	6½-7½kts	11½	50cwt	26	1 carried from 1959
27ft motor whaler	Double skin carvel round bilge	7ft	6½kts	11½	50cwt	23	2 carried as seaboats from 1959
16ft fast motor dinghy	Sheer strake clinker; hard chine carvel (skimming dish)	5ft 6in	14-24kts	24/28	18cwt	12	1 carried stowed starboard side of after funnel; 1942 stowed on top of 36ft motor pinnace; 1945 stowed on boat deck behind bridge superstructure
35ft landing craft personnel (large)	Hard chine	11ft 8in	18kts	225	125cwt	30	1 carried from 1948 until 1952. Handed over to HMS *Newcastle*

Sailing Boats

Type	Construction	Beam (excl rubbers)	Rig	Oars	Weight	Lifesaving capacity	Remarks
32ft cutter	Clinker (drop keel)	8ft 6½in	Single mast dehorsey or lug sloop	8 × 15ft 4 × 14ft	52cwt	59	2 carried until 1945
27ft whaler	Clinker (drop keel)	6ft	Two mast montagu	4 × 17ft 1 × 16ft	26cwt	27	2 carried underneath catapult deck on gantries until 1940; re-embarked on quadrantal davits in 1945 until 1956, then stowed on boat deck
14ft dinghy	Clinker (drop keel) – RNSA dinghy	5ft 4¾in	Single mast gunter	4 × 8ft	10cwt	6	2 normally carried for recreation purposes

Anchors and cables

Anchor	Type	Weight	Cable	Remarks
Bowers	Byers stockless	110cwt	15 lengths 12½ fathoms 2⅛in diam forged steel, 4 lengths 6¼ fathoms 2⅛in diam forged steel	2 carried port and starboard, used for anchoring and mooring
Sheet	Byers stockless	110cwt	1 length 2 fathoms 2⅛in diam forged steel, 150 fathoms 6½in steel wire hawser	1 carried starboard side until June 1943
Stream	Admiralty pattern with stock	14cwt	150 fathoms 2½in	1 carried for keeping ship's stern stationary in tidal stream
Kedge	Admiralty pattern with stock	10cwt	150 fathoms 2½in	Used for moving the ship by winding in on hawser

during World War I, whereby a ship should be painted 'not for low visibility, but in such a way as to break up her form and thus confuse a submarine officer as to the course on which she was heading.' Schemes devised for capital ships emphasised identity confusion rather than concealment. Through 1941 it became evident the polygons were too small to be differentiated at effective camouflage ranges. Simplified Admiralty light and dark disruptive schemes were promulgated in 1942 to use larger and simpler polygons with no more than four colours. Light disruptive schemes were intended for use in the higher latitudes where skies were often overcast. Dark disruptive

schemes used darker colours, providing more effective disruption where bright sunlight could be expected. *Belfast* was painted in two tones of grey, light and dark, to the instructions given here, with the reasoning that one of the colours chosen would be tricky to see under differing light circumstances.

Today, *Belfast* is painted with a World War II Admiralty disruptive camouflage scheme that employed polygons of varying shades of grey, blue and green so at least two of the colours would blend with background sea or sky under different light conditions.

CONFIDENTIAL
INSTRUCTIONS FOR PAINTING CAMOUFLAGE DESIGN
(TYPE A.D.)

1. The pattern of the camouflage when applied to the ship need not follow the drawing accurately within 3 feet.
2. Decks are to be painted 507.A. omitting Semtex or other composition if laid.
3. Non slip deck paint may be used on decks where a non slip foothold is necessary. If used this should be of grey not lighter than 507.A.
4. "507.A." refers to Admiralty Pattern 507.A. Dark Grey Home Fleet Shade.
   "507.C." refers to Admiralty Pattern 507.C. Light Grey for use on foreign stations.
5. Masts and Crow's nest should be painted white.
6. All athwartship vertical surfaces not shown on the diagrams to be painted 507.C.
7. The underside of all horizontal surfaces overhanging decks, bridge decks etc., to be painted white. This includes the underneath horizontal surfaces of Director Towers, undersides of Turrets etc.
8. That part of the deck itself that is overshadowed by the turret should in each case be painted white.
9. Boats should be painted white below the waterline. This may be impracticable, but if possible, it will proof [sic] a great help

in counteracting the large mass of contained shadow in the area of the boat's stowage.
10. Boat's chocks should be painted white.
11. Cranes to be painted 507.c.
12. Decks under torpedo tubes should be painted white.
13. Roofs of turrets should be painted 507.A.

BELFAST'S COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

The below Information is provided by HMS *Collingwood* Heritage Collection and covers the different kinds of radio used on the ship.

P38/2 Fighter direction system receiver part

FM12 MF DF outfit

This was medium frequency, and used for direction finding.

KCH/KCR/KFA/KFD/KGA control outfits

Control Units KC & KF (K = Control. 'C' could not be used because it was already assigned for other communication purposes. F = Flying)

KG control units

This series (now in addition to CCS and CWS) was fitted in the late-war years to enable British and American transmitters and receivers to be used remotely.

87M

This is a VHF Tx/RX used for fighter aircraft communication.

Type 405

Designed in 1936, Type 405 is a warning telephone outfit, better known as a ship's tannoy system, and was a Type of intercom with buzzers and alarms between various positions throughout the ship. Over the tannoy came spoken orders, pipes, bugle calls, action station clangers/siren and warnings.

73X

This is a UHF set working on about 600Mhz. It used supersonic CW and was being developed by Marconi. Development was stopped by the war. In 1939, Type 73 was listed as being CONFIDENTIAL. There were several variants of the set in addition to the Type 73 (basic model), viz, 73X (first experimental model), 73C (CCS), 73D (CWS).

FC 1

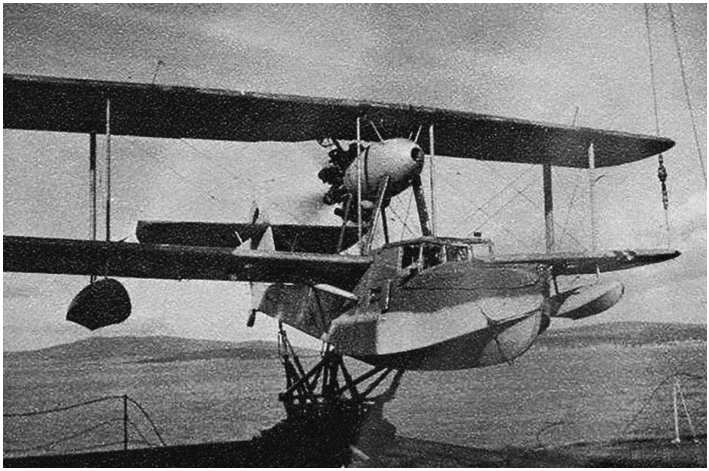
This was a D/F (direction finding) outfit used for simultaneous reception on M/F (medium-frequency 60–600kc/s) and H/F (667–20,000kc/s) with arrangements for tasking D/F bearings on M/F or H/F alternatively. It needed two operators with separate open aerials and receiving outfits.

AIRBORNE AND SURFACE EARLY DETECTION: RADAR

Typically, in 1939 cruisers were fitted with:
WA Type 281
Interrogator Type 243
WS Type 273Q
GS Type 284
GA Type 243

By 1945 *Belfast*'s radar types had mushroomed to include:

Type 242	IFF
Type 243	IFF
Type 253	IFF
Type 277	AA height finding and surface warning
Type 281	Air warning
Type 282 & 283	Pom-Pom directions and blind barrage
Type 274	6in. armament
Type 285	HA
Type 293Q	Close-range height finding and surface warning



This photograph of HMS Belfast's *Walrus aircraft taken by then Mid Terence Lewin, later Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin, is by kind permission of Lewin of Greenwich. The Walrus was used principally for reconnaissance, on anti-submarine patrol, recording gunnery fall of shot and enemy early warning. The* Belfast *had two. However, the introduction of radar in the fleet made an aircraft on board a cruiser redundant; the aircraft left on 6 June 1943 and the hangars were converted – one to a messdeck and the other to a church and cinema, while the catapult area housed more boats.*

The Walrus

Information on the Walrus supplied by The Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton

Aircraft type:	Supermarine Walrus (Seagull V)
Mark:	V
Primary Role:	Reconnaissance and Air/Sea rescue, amphibious
First Flight:	21.6.1933
Date operating with FAA squadrons:	1935–1945

Manufacturer:	Saunders-Roe (SARO)
Engine:	One 775 HP Bristol Pegasus VI radial engine
Wing Span:	45.8 ft (13.97 m)
Length:	37.2 ft (11.35 m)
Height:	15.3 ft (4.65 m)
Wing Area:	610 sq ft (56.67 sq m)
Empty Weight:	4,900 lb (2,223 kg)
Max.Weight:	7,200 lb (3,266 kg)
Speed:	135 mph (217 km/h)
Ceiling:	17,090 ft (2,210 m)
Range:	600 mi (966 km)
Armament:	Two Vickers 'K' guns – in nose and dorsal positions; 760lb of Bombs and Depth charges under wing
Crew:	3–4
Squadrons:	700, 701, 702, 710, 711, 712, 714, 715, 716, 718, 720, 722, 728, 730, 733, 737, 740, 742, 743, 747, 749, 751, 754, 757, 763, 764, 765, 771, 772, 773, 777, 778, 781, 782, 783, 787, 788, 789, 796, 836, 1700
Battle Honours:	Atlantic, Arctic, West Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, Singapore

The Walrus Mk 2 had a wooden hull. They were built by Saunders-Roe of Cowes, Isle of Wight. After a number were built (*British Flying-Boats & Amphibians I909–I952* G.R. Duval (PUTNAM) indicate 6), the production reverted to the original Alclad (corrosion-resistant aluminium) hull, due to the extra weight of the wood plus water absorbed.

The aircraft endeared itself to all who became involved and was affectionately called various names, some unprintable. Shagbat, Flying Pig, Dick and Steam Pigeon were a few of the better known. It was recognised as a solid beast and would take a lot of punishment. It was known to have been spun, looped, rolled and stall turned: the stall was viceless. It was said, before the war, that it was the only aircraft

strong enough to do a bunt. Some of these aerobatics would, no doubt, make life a little uncomfortable for the crew. The floor boards, bilge water, oil from the hydraulic reservoir and loose objects would have caused some consternation. It was also known for one of the propeller blades to be fitted back to front, in which case the aircraft refused to fly!

(Further information can be found at www.fleetairarmarchive.net/Aircraft/Walrus.htm)

SHIP-HANDLING CHARACTERISTICS

1. The ship handles very well, but she is a heavy ship and takes some stopping.
2. When steadying on a new course, "Midships" 10° before, and opposite wheel 3°-5° before, for slow swing, and 5°-7° before, for a fast swing.
3. She has a fairly quick roll and is rather wet.
4. The following reductions in speed have been used:

(a) Anchoring	10 cables	8 knots
	3 cables	Stop
	1 cable	Slow astern; increasing to half astern as necessary
(b) Mooring	10 cables	8 knots
	2 cables	Stop
	Let go (first anchor)	Slow astern
(c) Coming to a buoy	10 cables	8 knots
	3 cables	Stop
	1½ cables	Slow astern
(d) Going alongside	8 cables	Slow ahead
	2 cables	Stop
	1 cable	Slow astern; increasing to half astern as necessary

These distances have been used when steaming on 4 shafts with 4 boilers connected. Should only two boilers be connected it is necessary to start going astern about a quarter of a cable earlier.

5. There is quite a noticeable difference in the acceleration when four boilers are connected and when two are connected. Gain and loss of speed allowances under normal circumstances and in speeds range 8-20 knots have been:

(a) With normal rate of increase/decrease 55 yards per knot
(b) With E.R. using timed increase/decrease 80 yards per knot

In practice, if the E.R. are given warning the 55 yard per knot figure is fairly good, but a good deal depends on the personalities in the engineroom.

When accelerating with four boilers connected use 55 yards per knot figure, and when accelerating with two boilers connected rather more should be allowed and 60 yards/knots is a fair estimate for an increase in speed.

6. If only two shafts are connected turning at rest becomes a very tedious affair, and should only be attempted if there is no leeway problem.

Otherwise for turning at rest 80 revs ahead and 90 revs astern with 20° wheel has been found satisfactory. The ship is slow to turn, though, when dead stopped and due allowance should be made when leaving harbour in formation, as *BELFAST* always seems to take longer than anyone else to get pointed.

7. Sternboards.

This has been tried with success in Grand Harbour, Malta. The ship turned in the entrance with a little headway on between St. Elmo breakwater and Ricasole point. Having pointed the stern down harbour, 120 revs astern were rung on and the ship having gathered sternway steered quite well. When 720 feet from the required stopped position engines were rung on to half ahead 150 revs, and the ship stopped in the required position.

This method of approaching the buoy was quicker than approaching the buoys direct and turning in the berth.

8. Weighing.

Caution is needed when weighing to avoid the cable getting jammed on the P.V. ram on the forefoot. Should the cable be growing around the bow it is advisable to point the ship to open the hawse or give the ship a kick astern to achieve the same effect. This should be particularly guarded against when weighing in company.

9. Suez Canal.

The ship was a little sluggish at 7½ knots (canal speed) but stable. At 106 revs (12 knots) in the southern part of the canal steering became a little erratic (tide was against). The most comfortable speed seemed to be between 86 and 96 revs on four shafts. Some opposite wheel was needed occasionally on the turns but the ship did not take a sheer. 19 knots were rung on through the Bitter Lakes with no adverse effect.

10. Approaching a buoy with two shafts only.

The following plan was used with success in calm conditions, with two boilers connected.

10 cables	8 knots
8 cables	Slow
3 cables	Stop
1½ cables	Slow astern
1¼ cables	Half astern (80 revs)

Cut off distances

From G.D.P looking directly ahead	32 yards from bow
From G.D.P looking directly astern	35 yards from stern
From Compass platform looking ahead	58 yards from bow
From Compass platform looking astern	61 yards from stern

Chapter 2

HMS *Belfast*'s role in World War II

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

1939	Capture of *Cap Norte*
	Damaged by a magnetic mine
1939–42	Repairs in Devonport
1942–43	Arctic convoys
26 Dec 1943	Sinking *Scharnhorst* (Battle of North Cape)
1944	D-Day landings

CAPTURE OF *CAP NORTE*

An account by Rear Admiral George Thring CB, DSO*

When R Adm George Thring CB, DSO joined HMS* Belfast *in August 1939 as a lieutenant-commander, the ship was being taken in hand from her builders, Harland and Wolff, in Belfast. He saw active service throughout World War II, mainly on convoy duties (including an Arctic convoy), and later in Korea. After a number of senior appointments he retired in 1958.*

This account of his time in the ship, taken from his personal recollections, by kind permission of his son, Cdr Edward Thring RN, describes his impressions on joining; how she was employed as part of the Home Fleet 18th Cruiser Squadron based at Scapa Flow; and the capture of the German merchant vessel Cap Norte *(13,165 tons) of the Hamburg Sud-America line while carrying wheat imports and German reservists.*

I am sure the majority of us thought that war would come, probably before the end of the year; therefore "Britain's latest Cruiser" was to us a matter of life and death.

The ship did not yet belong to us, and we were still spectators. Early on in the proceedings, when steaming at comparatively high speed, everything stopped. The ship slowed down, out of control, all lights went out and nothing worked. It gave us an uncomfortable feeling for

a short time; was this the sort of thing that might happen in action? However the fault was soon discovered; some inexperienced man had connected the boilers to an oil tank which was nearly empty.

We were still very new, and very green. However we were undoubtedly a very happy ship. The organisation ran smoothly, and people smiled. We still had experts from Vickers on board performing feats with gun mountings; and we had another civilian for wireless or gyro compasses; they remained until the job was finished, without complaint.

Then came Sunday, 3rd September 1939 and with it war, submarine scares, aircraft alarms and so on. Surprisingly nothing happened; the Hun apparently was doing one thing at a time.

Trials were marvellous, everyone returned to Belfast with the feeling that she was a fine ship, and all that was now required was from our side, the Naval side, to make her efficient by organisation and training.

We were literally "pitchforked" straight into a large scale naval exercise. Someone had to be "the enemy", we became the "Hipper". Her duty was to start from the Horn's Reef (of Jutland fame) and try to break through the Northern patrol, extending as in the last war from Scotland to Iceland. On the way to Horn's Reef we learnt how to darken ship, a certain amount of simple gun drill and how to master the new control system. Damage and breakdowns were also practised in a small way. Off the Horn's Reef we sighted a large liner, one of the "Strength through Joy" cruises of Hitler Youth, returning to the Fatherland.

We were also visited by a German Seaplane, who flew close round the ship, inspecting, and probably photographing "Britain's latest Cruiser" from every angle. He gave us a friendly wave before leaving us alone. I wonder where that young chap is now!

Our "Hipper", taking a most audacious route, much too much so for the careful planning Hun, got through to "raid" the Atlantic, with nearly all her oil fuel in hand. As soon as the exercise was over the Home Fleet assembled at Invergordon.

The first shoots were quite satisfactory. Never had a ship had a battery of six four inch high angle guns on each side before, and each side was out to rival the other. Shells went in all directions, control was very limited. The aircraft, towing the sleeve target stood up to it for a time; the aircraft went home, and reported us as a public

menace! Which we undoubtedly were; but we had learnt how to let the guns off – control would come with practice.

At about this time our "Walrus" arrived; we should have had three but there were not three to be had. Catapult trials were carried out. We also exercised hoisting it in by crane, a far more tricky business than shooting it off. Incidentally, that is the last we saw of our aircraft, which went to shore base for anti-submarine patrol round the Orkneys. For North Atlantic in Winter aircraft were not required.

We joined a power force for a high speed sweep to the North. It was an inspiring sight to see the HOOD and RENOWN again; both old friends of Home Fleet peace time cruises and exercises.

Our job was to prevent others escaping to join her on the trade routes. The SCHARNHORST and GNEISNAU were a formidable pair and would undoubtedly try to slip through; more pocket Battleships similar to the GRAF SPEE were also available, not to mention modern eight inch cruisers. It is a significant fact, showing the Germans' complete failure to appreciate Naval Warfare (other than U-boats), that they did not sally forth at once into the Atlantic before our aircraft were more available to shadow them, and when our shipping was still moving from peace time to war time routes, and almost completely uncovered. Indeed when they did slip through, they made singularly little use of their opportunities.

This time we were to take our place in the famous Northern Patrol. This meant intercepting and boarding every ship met, leaving armed guards on board, and sending them in for examination. We found our boat work exercises had been well spent. It is necessary for a cruiser to keep moving during boarding operations, due to the U-boat menace, and to the possibility of the ship being a disguised raider, armed with unseen torpedo tubes and guns. We boarded many ships, two of which were of more than normal interest. The first was a Norwegian Whale factory.

The second event was of far greater interest. One morning we sighted a fairly large liner eastward bound. We increased speed to intercept, and saw she was flying Swedish colours; later we could read her name, that of a Swedish ship not known to be in the area, according to Lloyds, and not quite the same size to look at. We unfortunately had no picture for comparison. Weather again was

rough. We got very close to the "Neutral", getting more suspicious every minute. We could see a dark patch on her bow where something had been painted over, and all doubt was removed when we could read through the paint, due to the embossed lettering of her old paint, and read her original name "Cap Norte". The boat returned and an extra party was sent on board, all possible precautions were taken by the boarding party to prevent scuttling; but in those days the technique had not been acquired by the Hun and possibly the Fuhrer's orders on the subject had not been received. Thus the first large prize fell to HMS BELFAST. It gave us a big thrill, and a feeling of accomplishment. I believe she still is the largest ship captured from the Germans, and she had a small but exceedingly valuable cargo.

The boarding party had no trouble. There were women and children on board returning to the Fatherland; for that reason, the Captain said he had not scuttled his ship, assuming that we would not board in the prevailing weather; but that we would just escort her in. He could then scuttle unhampered by a boarding party, on reaching calmer waters. The boarding parties' relations with their captives were not strained, courtesy prevailed; and one could not help feeling very sorry for that Captain, who had lost his ship, having left South America "under his lawful occasion" before war started. I saw that ship again some time later with her third and British name ["Empire Trooper"] lying alongside at Gibraltar.

We passed the Faroes and sighted Iceland on several occasions and judged the distance to be steamed from the Northern end of the patrol in order to fuel in the Shetlands, at Sollum Voe, our nearest British fuelling post. Sollum Voe is a bleak spot and gives little opportunity for recreation; we went in behind the hastily improvised defences, fuelled, possibly had a night's rest, and then to sea again.

News programmes came through regularly on the B.B.C. and the absence of real news was the most remarkable thing. But one could not help feeling that the Navy was the only part of the Nation actually doing anything.

At Scapa we were always having some sort of air raid warning. Soon the Armed Merchant Cruisers, taken up and hastily converted, started to arrive at Scapa. Old friends, they were to take over the contraband control patrol, and their other duty of reporting a

breakthrough of a raider. Their arrival made us free for our proper function, that of a Fleet Cruiser.

In the early hours of the morning a Signalman came into my cabin, and showed me a signal to the effect that the ROYAL OAK had been sunk, and that the Fleet was to go to sea at once.

It has since been disclosed that the ROYAL OAK was torpedoed by Prion, that fine submarine "ace", who subsequently showed Huns how new techniques could enable U-boats to attack convoys. His exploit was daring, his navigation of a very tricky channel superb, one cannot help taking one's hat off to a fine Seaman and brilliant Submariner, who has since paid the penalty. He was sunk by Walruses 6 March 1941.

The account by R Adm George Thring continues with his description of HMS Belfast*'s crippling from a German magnetic mine, which saw her put out of action and taken to Devonport for a two-year rebuild.*

Then came orders to proceed to the Clyde. The passage through the Minches was trying. It was our first experience of high speed steaming in close formation at night and zig-zagging. A critical moment arrived when the "snotty"(*Midshipman*), who was watching the time, announced that the watch had stopped, and that he did not know when the next zig should be. At the same time a blinding storm blotted out the next ahead. One could not help wondering if all this risk was worth it, in view of the small number of U-boats out. It was very good practice all the same.

At this time we had heard of the first of the magnetic mines. It caused a certain amount of disquiet. We gathered there were two sorts, big ones for attacking the fleet, and little ones for merchant ships.

We were not left in doubt very long. Our flagship and ourselves proceeded into the Firth of Forth for exercises; AA armament was as usual partially manned in case of enemy interference. We had decided it would be a good thing to wire up a microphone from the air defence position to the ship's loud speaker system, partly as a means of getting guns onto a target quickly, and partly to keep the remainder of the ship's company "in the picture", who could not see what was going on, due to their work being between decks. Some sort of running commentary was indicated, such as "Goering has just come on to bowl at the Forth Bridge end". "The first over was mainly wides; but one ball narrowly missed so and so". However this innovation was only at present a make-shift arrangement. The Chief PO Telegraphist

was first explaining to me what switches to make. He told me, with a note of anxiety, that it was his only spare "mike", and that it was very delicate, due to not being in a proper holder. He had just given it to me, with a final word imploring me not to drop it, when the earthquake occurred, and crash went the mike onto the steel deck!

As far as I remember I held on tight to the rail round the control platform; and then, as the heaving underfoot ceased, had a look round. The Chief PO Tel and I were "garlanded" with wireless aerials. The first thing that caught my eye was the top mast at a drunken angle of about thirty degrees to the rest of the mast. The next thing I noticed was my Brother-in-law's motor boat completely wrecked on the catapault deck!

The ship behaved exactly as during that first break down on trials. All machinery ceased to function; all electric power broke down. It should have been perfectly obvious that the ship had either been torpedoed or mined.

All communication had failed with my guns and most of them could not be trained. I therefore decided to leave the control position, and see what I could do to help the Commander. I found out that he, armed with every torch he could find, was busy shoring up hatches and generally controlling damage, ably assisted by the engineers. There was no sense of giving orders quickly, since the loudspeaker system had been cut off. However, we had organised "boatswains mates" and messengers just for this eventuality, who were most useful.

On deck we prepared the ship for towing. There was a most convenient tug, who had been sent out to tow the target for our shoot. The tug took us in tow and pointed us slowly towards home.

The apparent damage, as viewed from the upper deck, was not great. It was also reported that the ship was not making water seriously. The most evident phenomena was the presence of oil fuel almost everywhere between decks, and the complete wreckage of mess decks.

We had actually touched off a large magnetic mine right under the foremast. One result of this was that a column of water, stated by the flagship to have risen as high as the mainmast, deposited itself on the after part of the ship, largely on the Gunnery Officer and his Gunner, who were damp, but unhurt.

Casualties occurred mainly in the two ends of the ship which "whipped" furiously as the "earthquake" took place. The medical team did marvellous work.

After a time electric supply came to life. By a great effort the Engineers managed to get the partially damaged diesel generator going. This gave us light, wireless, internal communications by loud speaker and telephone, and one of the two electric cranes. By means of the latter we were able to hoist on board a salvage pump which had been sent out together with two tugs. The three tugs between them towed us at 5 or 6 knots towards home, which fortunately was not far off.

Then we were safely taken in tow. The galleys had been wrecked forward; however the Paymaster Commander and the canteen staff between them organised sandwiches. The spirit room was found to be intact, and a rum ration was issued; a little later tea started to appear, after which comforts everyone seemed to buck up again.

Once in the Rosyth dockyard, as the water was pumped out, the ship started to rest on the chocks. This caused her to creak and groan like an animal in pain. Rivets were sheared, and the deck itself began to crack. Pumping was therefore stopped, and the ship left floating, just clear of the chocks.

It was quite clear that the keel had been bent upwards, the two ends of the ship having sat on the chocks before the midship section. Only one man died. Patients were allowed to have their relations up to see them.

Christmas on board was rather cold and grim. Early in the New Year we paid off. Special trains came into the dockyard to embark men bound for Portsmouth barracks, whence they would be scattered to the four corners of the earth. Behind us in the dock was the wreck of one of the finest ships ever built. Our hearts were very heavy.

The Naval Constructors made a magnificent temporary repair, binding the ship in a cradle, of sufficient strength to enable her to steam on two shafts, from Rosyth to Devonport. Her reconstruction took a long time. I am sure it gave us all, of the original commission, a great thrill, when we later heard the BELFAST had played a leading and most successful part in the sinking of the SCHARNHORST.

Mid Lewin (later AF Lord Lewin) was the coxswain of the ship's cutter (boat) that took the boarding party to the blockade runner merchantman Cap Norte – *disguising herself as a Swedish neutral: the SS* Ancona – *and took the surrender of the merchantman.*

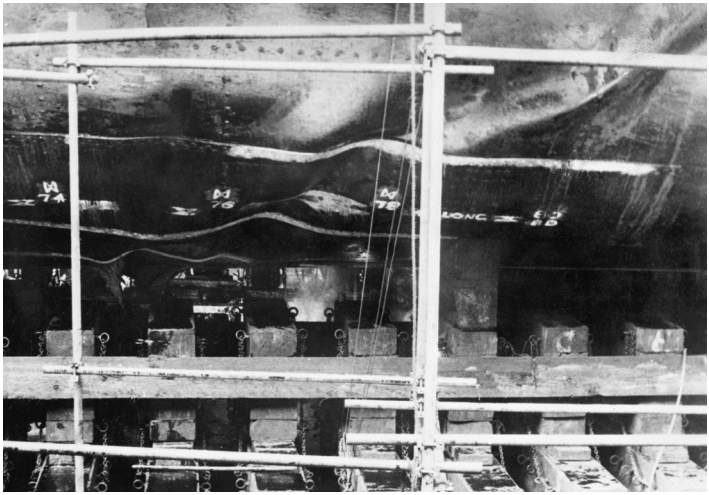
SHIP'S LOG DURING THE *CAP NORTE* INCIDENT

HMS *Belfast*—October 9, 1939—at sea

0800	Latitude 63° 51'N Longitude 07° 35'W
	Wind: ESE Force 4
	Weather and visibility: blue skies, seven miles
0800	a/c to MLA (Mean Line of Advance) 263° St'd 4 in. Defence Watch closed up
0854	Sighted steamship bearing 278° Co SE
0900	Courses and speeds as requisite for closing ship
0915	Ordered SS *Tai Yin* to stop
0946	Armed guard boarded
1102	SS *Tai Yin* ordered to Kirkwall
1104	Sighted liner bearing 300°. Closed as requisite. Ordered SS *Ancona* (Swedish) to stop. Ship was found to be SS *Cap Norte* (German)
1210	Strong armed guard boards
1313	2nd armed guard left ship and boarded
1347	*Cap Norte* proceeded
1354	Proceeded. Course 105° 15 knots.

HMS *BELFAST* STRUCK BY MINE

HMS *Belfast* ship's log records in a matter-of-fact manner, giving drama to the event, the occasion when she struck a German mine.



Damage to the hull of HMS Belfast *taken in Devonport Dockyard 1940. (Getty Images)*

Tuesday, November 21, 1939: At Rosyth (see Glossary for abbreviation explanations)

	(Leave granted to ship's company: Nil)
0800	*Wind: SW Force 3*
	Weather and visibility: blue skies, seven miles
	Sea and swell: 7
	Barometer: 1032.2 (rising)
0917	Weighed and proceeded. Course and speed as requisite for leaving harbour and carrying out firings in company with *Southampton*
0947	Passed through A/S boom. 1005 out paravanes
1030	a/c to 025° 1037 295° 1042 115° 1049 060°
1058	Violent explosion felt in *Belfast*. Extensive damage
1140	Taken in tow by tug *Krooman*
1314	Prepared to abandon ship

From: *D4*
To: *Belfast*

Please keep me informed of your condition so that I can inform C in C Rosyth	1112
Light PL TOD 1117	21/11/39

To: *D4*
From: *Belfast*

Keep Destroyers on the move screening me	1115
Light PL TOD 1116	21/11/39

To: *Belfast*
From: *D4*

Do you require towing?		1114
REPLY: Yes certainly		1115
Light PL TOD 1115	TOD 1116	21/11/39

To: C in C Rosyth (R) C S 2
From: *Belfast*

"A" Boiler and Engine Room out of action. Improbable that steam can be raised. Explosion was abreast "A" Boiler Room	1116
Light PL TOD 1119	21/11/39

To: *Belfast*
From: *Euryalus*

Can we be of any assistance? Divers are dressed and all ready	
Light PL TOR 1120	21/11/39

To: *Euryalus*
From: *Belfast*

Return to harbour and be ready to help when we return to harbour	1125
Light PL TOD1127	21/11/39

To: *Belfast*
From: *Whitley*

Shall I come alongside your starboard side forward to facilitate passing tow	
Light PL TOR 1130	21/11/39

To: *D4, Whitley*
From: *Belfast*

Tug *Krooman* is endeavouring to tow me if he is able to do so, keep *Whitley* screening	1130
Light PL TOD 1133	21/11/39

To: *Whitley*
From: *Belfast*

Keep on the move	1131
Light PL TOD 1132	21/11/39

To: *Krooman*
From: *Belfast*

Come alongside starboard bow, slip your targets	1133
Light PL TOD 1155	21/11/39

To: *Belfast*
From: *Euryalus*

Shall I take the target from Tug?	
REPLY: Yes tug has slipped target endeavour to get them in tow	1137
Light PL TOR 1126 TOD 1138	21/11/39

To: *D4*
From: *Belfast*

Report to Rosyth that Tug *Krooman* is towing, but further assistance is urgently required. Ship will not be able to steam and probably not steer. Approximate casualties Dead NIL Injured 16	1148
Light PL TOD 1152	21/11/39

To: *Belfast*
From: *D4*

Is it certain that it was a torpedo please?	1211
REPLY: No I cannot tell as nothing was seen	1216
Light PL TOR 1214 TOD 1216	21/11/39

To: *Belfast* for C D
From A S

Outer caisson of lock is open. Ship can enter lock whenever there is sufficient depth of water to navigate main channel	1249
Light PL TOR 1333 TOD 1549	21/11/39

To: C-in-C Rosyth, CS2, CD
From: *Belfast*

Explosion at about 80 and possibly two other right aft. Ship flooded to waterline from 66 to 93.4 in. HA magazine flooded. Making water in forward Engine Room and possibly "A" Boiler Room. Steam cannot be raised except for one dynamo as all Turbo oil fuel pumps out of action. Steering gear in use. Draught increased to two feet forward four inches aft. Oil fuel cannot be pumped out forward. Casualties Dead NIL, 21 injured, some seriously. Hope to arrive for immediate docking 1500, essential to dry dock immediately.	1259
Light PL TOD 1300	21/11/39

To: A S
From: C D

Propose to berth *Belfast* in "Y" berth. Will you please clear berth, rough time of arrival 1630 today Tuesday.	1303
Light PL TOD 1325	21/11/39

To: *D4*
From: *Belfast*

Destroyers are to continue screening up to the Gate so far as navigationally possible and to remain in close company till ship enters basin.	1318
Light PL TOD 1332	21/11/39

To: *Belfast*
From: *D4*

C in C and R A D think I am hunting. May I take *Gurkha* and *Isis* and search when you have reached Inchkeith.	1349
Light PL TOD 1349	21/11/39

To: *D4*
From: *Belfast*

Yes I had no idea that you were supposed to be hunting. Many thanks for your screening.	1351
Light PL TOD 1355	21/11/39

To: C D
From: *Belfast*

At 1315 draught was as follows:	23 feet 9 forward	
	22 feet aft	
Light PL TOD 1400		21/11/39

Summary of Mine Damage Report 21-11-39 by D.N.C. Dept Admiralty Bath (DNC 4B/R1) - Restricted
The effect of the mining on this ship was most severe, causing 100% disablement.

Although the direct impingement of the explosive forces caused negligible hull damage, the secondary effect was that the vessel broke her back in the region of the break of the forecastle. In this neighbourhood this class of ship undergoes a quick change of inertia of cross section, due to such causes as the stopping of the Upper Armour Deck, Side Armour and Inner Bottom. Just forward of this quick change of inertia is a relatively heavy concentration of load, caused by 'A' and 'B' turrets and the bridge structure. The structure was evidently unable to withstand the very rapid and large amplitude motions induced by an underwater explosion of the type encountered.

The main machinery was also fully disabled, firstly due to fractures of oil fuel pump discharges entirely robbing the burners of fuel, and secondly, had steam been available, it is doubtful if the main engines could have been run for very long without defects developing sufficiently seriously to cause them to be shut down.

The main armament and a large portion of the secondary armament would probably have failed to function if attempts had been made to fire it.

REPAIRS AT DEVONPORT

When HMS *Belfast* had completed her 26-month refit in Devonport she was updated to become the Royal Navy's strongest cruiser, able to take on an 8in.-gun enemy ship or any other cruiser worldwide. In summary this table shows her modernisation. Of particular note is that she was fitted with the latest radar, which concentrated on U-boat hunting, whereas German radar focussed on gunnery. *Belfast*'s radar was later to play a key role in finding the *Scharnhorst*.

HMS *Belfast*'s modernisation

Armament:	**November 1942**
Main:	as at 1939
Ammunition:	as at 1939
Radar:	1 × Type 284 on for'd DCT—main armament surface

	1 × Type 273 General warning, surface; in lantern aft of for'd DCT
	4 × Type 283 blind barrage directors for 6 in. armament
	1 × Type 252 IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) to combine with 273
	1 × Type 251 IFF
High Angle:	**November 1942**
Guns and Mountings:	as at 1939
Ammunition:	as at 1939
Fire Control:	The three HA Directors were modified to Mark IVs to take Type 285 radar for radar controlled fire
Radar:	3 × Type 285
	1 × Type 281 *Air Warning*, Transmitter aerial on foremast; receiver aerial on mainmast
	1 × Type 242 *Air Warning IFF* aerials on top of 281 receiver
Close range:	**November 1942**
2-pdr. Pom-poms:	The two Mark II mountings were replaced by two Mark VIII RPC (Remote Power Control)
Ammunition:	1800 rounds per barrel
	14 rounds per belt; 10 belts per tray
Fire Control:	The Mark II Directors were replaced by two Mark IV pom-pom directors and repositioned near the mountings
	2 × Type 282 radar being fitted to the directors. The guns and directors were RPC. The weight of a director was 36 cwt
Operation:	Power or hand: maximum elevating and training speed, 16 degrees/second loading was carried out by using the energy of the recoiling barrel

Sights:	Cosine	
20 mm. Oerlikons		
Twins:	Ten ·20 mm. Oerlikon guns in five Mark V twin mountings equipped with tachymetric sights were fitted in exposed positions about the ship. The mountings were shielded, power controlled and later tied to radar sights; 1 on roof of "B" turret, 1 on each wing of the lower bridge, for'd; 2 right aft on the quarterdeck and protected by concave and roofed shelters	
Control:	RPC through HA barrage directors	
Singles:	Eight single Oerlikons, Mark IV on Mark IIIA fixed pedestal mountings were fitted, four each side on the catapult deck	
Ammunition:	2400 rounds per gun in Ready Use lockers and stowage in pom-pom magazine	
	Though hand operated and sighted by eye-shooting using a 300 kwt. sighting ring, these single Oerlikons were comforting weapons. With an effective range of 1000-1200 yd., the gun was very versatile being manufactured in America as well as Britain and all parts being interchangeable.	
Details:	Calibre:	20 mm.
	MV:	*2725 ft./sec.*
	Rate of fire:	465/480 r.p.m.
	Length:	8 ft.
	Weight of gun:	173 lb.
	Weight of pedestal:	140 lb.
	Elevation:	75°
	Training:	360°
·5 in. Machineguns:	Removed—replaced by twin Oerlikons	

Torpedo department

Six-21 in. Mark IV torpedoes were replaced by six-21 in. Mark VIII** Depth-charge Outfit was enlarged:

15 Mark VIIs—ship

12 Mark VIII—aircraft

Rangefinder unit (22 ft. Duplex and PIL FM7 rangefinder on an MR II anti-vibration mounting) with air-disturbing, desiccating and window-cleaning units.

The after DCT was fitted with 15 ft. FX2 rangefinder on an MR13 anti-vibration mounting.

The two lower Bridge rangefinders were removed.

A loud-hailer system was fitted to incorporate all close range weapons.

A Type 760 Echo Sounder was fitted.

Two extra paravanes were carried, totalling six Mark VII and Mark VII* which replaced the original outfit.

The aircraft

Fearnought fire covers were fitted to the hangars.

Two Walrus amphibians were carried until June 6, 1943 when they were landed and the catapult removed.

A collection of papers was found among the documents of Capt P. H. E. Welby-Everard, DSC, OBE, DL, RN. He served in HMS Belfast *as her commander from 1942 until 1944. This is the first of four articles and describes a little-recorded dockyard problem. They are reproduced with the kind permission of his son, Roger Welby-Everard.*

HMS *BELFAST* – RATS

After being mined in 1939 the ship was over two years in Devonport dockyard undergoing a major reconstruction below the waterline during which period she became overrun with rats. When the interior of the ship was made habitable again towards the end of this long refit, and once the ventilation was restarted and the ship's company began living aboard, the rats got disturbed from their comfortable quarters between decks and many of them moved out to the huge pile of old and other rubbish that had accumulated ashore. During

the last week or two before commissioning the Dockyard Rat-catcher was reported to have killed 250 rats alongside the ship.

Rats were, however, still plentiful on board and we would have liked to have had the ship fumigated before commissioning but the 48-hour delay this would have entailed was not acceptable in wartime so we had to take the rats to sea with us. On the upper deck was a large vegetable locker made of wire mesh, the inboard side being panelled with wood to protect it from the heat of the boiler uptakes. After a month or two it was apparent that numbers of rats had made their home in this panelling and on the next occasion that the locker was nearly empty of vegetables the Commander shut the entire Shipwrights staff into the locker with instructions to strip this panelling completely; an exciting rat hunt took place inside the locker, watched with interest by those outside, and when the Shipwrights were released they brought with them 67 dead rats.

1942–43 ARCTIC CONVOYS AND NORTHERN WATERS OPERATIONS

In the History of the Second World War the term Arctic Convoy conjures up an image of endurance against great odds, of battles fought in the Arctic night in which ice, snow and high winds added to the horrors of war. It was indeed conditions in the Arctic which set the convoys to Northern Russia apart from other theatres of war. In winter seamen fought a continual battle against gales and ice in almost perpetual darkness; in summer the sun rarely set and there was no respite from the threat or reality of attack. In fact the Arctic convoys were amazingly successful. Of a total of forty outward convoys comprising of 811 ships only 68 were sunk. Those that got through delivered great quantities of tanks, aircraft, ammunition, and other essential war materials which made a significant contribution to Russia's role in the war.

Terence Lewin; Admiral of the Fleet KG, GCB, LVO, DSC
12 convoys, *Belfast* veteran, First patron of the Russian Convoy Club

The log of *Belfast*'s activities from December 1942 to August 1945 gives but a mild view of the intensity of operations as the crew

endured extreme cold and nerve-wracking worry of a German attack by U-boat, aircraft or surface units of the German Navy.

1942	
December 10	Left Plymouth for Scapa
December 25	Scapa, *10th Cruiser Squadron (Home Fleet)*
1943	
February 17	Arrived Seidisfjord, Iceland

Russian Convoys

1943	
February 19	Off Seidisfjord in company with *Cumberland*, *Sheffield*, *Bluebell*, *Camellia* and destroyers
February 21	Left Seidisfjord with *Cumberland* and *Norfolk* to cover Russian Convoy JW53
March 1	Murmansk
March 2	Left Kola Inlet with *Cumberland* and *Norfolk* to cover Russian Convoy RA53

Northern Blockade Patrol: 1943

March 29	Left Hvalfjord
	Ordered to reinforce Patrol "White" with *Intrepid*—Search for Blockade Runner
March 30	Patrol "White" with *Glasgow*, *Intrepid* and *Echo*
April 2	Sailed to relieve *Cumberland* on Patrol "White"
April 7	On west coast of Iceland to Patrol "White"
April 13	Arrived at Hvalfjord having been relieved on patrol by *Cumberland (10th Cruiser Squadron) (Home Fleet)*
May 27	Arrived Scapa from covering mine-laying operations, SN111B

June 18	Arrived Rosyth to give leave and for quick docking. Ship to sail for Scapa so as to arrive July 1
July 1	Arrived Scapa
July 7	Sailed from Scapa to the north-eastward in company with *London*, *Kent* and one destroyer
	OPERATION "CAMERA", a diversionary sweep off Norway to exploit, during the Sicilian Landings, Hitler's continued fear of an Allied counter invasion of that country. Operation was successful because the cruisers were mistaken for a transport convoy
July 9	Arrived Scapa in company with *London* and *Kent*
July 27	Left Scapa
July 29	Arrived Scapa

Russian Convoys: 1943

August 15	After HM the King's visit to the Home Fleet, CS10 in *Belfast*, screened by *Onslow* and *Orwell*, left Scapa to create a diversion off the South Norwegian coast—*OPERATION FN*, a covering sweep for the JW/RA Russian Convoys
August 17	Returned to Skaale Fjord with *Onslow* and *Orwell*
August 22	Left Scapa
August 28	Sailed from Hvalfjord with *Norfolk* and *Impulsive* to cover destroyers in *OPERATION "LORRY"*: stores and mail to Russia
September 3	Returned to Hvalfjord with *Norfolk* and *Impulsive: OPERATION "LORRY"* Left Hvalfjord with CS10 for reconnaissance and search in the Spitzbergen area: the enemy had landed a meteorological party on this desolate island, an action the Allies were to imitate. CS10 was ordered to investigate an intelligence report of a German raid on the island

September 10	Arrived Hvalfjord
September 25	In vicinity *of* Reykjanes searching to south-east *OPERATION SF*; suspected enemy break-out of blockade runner
September 27	Arrived Scapa

Home Fleet Offensive Sweep: October 5/6,1943

	10th Cruiser Squadron (Home Fleet) Sailed from Scapa in company with *Duke of York*, *Anson*, U.S. Aircraft Carrier *Ranger* and U.S. Heavy Cruiser *Tuscaloosa* to attack shipping targets in the Bodo area with the air striking group from *Ranger*
	OPERATION "LEADER": diversionary, as well as offensive, to ease pressure on the Russian convoys, was successful
October 6	Scapa: self-refit, boiler-clean and leave period
October 29	Left Scapa

This second extract from the papers of Capt P. H. E. Welby-Everard tells of an unusual way the crew enjoyed a varied diet.

HMS *BELFAST* – FISH FOR ALL

When the ship joined the home fleet at the end of 1942, after the long reconstruction at Devonport, she carried an aircraft which could be catapulted off at sea and could carry antisubmarine depth charges. The pilot was an RNVR (Lieutenant Commander Sergeant) who was extremely keen but our service did not have much use for his aircraft. The aircraft was later landed.

On one occasion we anchored in Quel fjord in Iceland for a short period between patrols in the Denmark Strait, and the pilot, obtaining the Captain's permission to carry out a depth charge practice, was hoisted out and took off for his exercise. Some considerable time later the aircraft was seen to be entering the fjord on the surface and appeared to be having some difficulty in taxi-ing back to the

ship; fortunately it was calm weather. As the aircraft approached the ship it was seen to be very low in the water but eventually arrived alongside and was hoisted on board. It was then discovered that it was loaded to the gunwales with cod as the pilot had seen a shoal of cod out to sea and had dropped his depth charge in the middle of the shoal. He then landed on the surface and taxied around picking up stunned fish until the flying boat could take no more with safety; with the weight of fish on board he was unable to take to the air and had to taxi in slowly many miles back to the ship. Everyone in *Belfast* had a welcome meal of fresh fish as a result of this depth charge practice.

This third extract from the papers of Capt P. H. E. Welby-Everard recounts how an unexpected VIP's visit necessitated painting the ship, even though Belfast *would be in rough seas on operations in a couple of days.*

HMS *BELFAST* – THE "TIDDLEY B"

In 1943 *Belfast*, under the Command of Captain F. R. Parham (Executive Officer Commander P. H. E. Welby-Everard) and flying the flag of Rear Admiral R. L. Burnett commanding the 10th cruiser Squadron, was serving in the Home Fleet and at one period in the first half of that year found herself in harbour at Scapa Flow together with a high proportion of the fleet. One morning, after the Admiral had been to see the Commander-in-Chief in HMS *Duke of York*, the Captain sent for his Commander and informed him, in confidence, that H. M. The King was to inspect the Fleet in three days time and that the Admiral had suggested it might be an appropriate occasion to paint ship.

For wartime conditions the ship was not looking too bad and the Commander would not normally have considered painting the ship at this time but the Admiral's hint was as good as an order particularly, as appeared to be the case, if the Admiral was giving *Belfast* an opportunity to steal a march on the rest of the fleet. The Commander sent to the ship's Painter and ordered him immediately to prepare the paint pots and brushes as it was intended to paint the whole superstructure the next day. The time available did not permit

the painting of the ship's side as well as the superstructure; the latter was clearly the more important under the circumstances.

The news soon got round the ship and there was doubtless a great deal of "tooth-sucking" amongst the seamen who thought that the Commander must have taken leave of his senses to have such an idea when we all knew that in a few days time we could expect to go to sea on operations. However, the ship's company will always rise to the occasion and *Belfast* was a very happy ship, and all the next day all hands turned to with a will and a coat of paint was applied to the whole of the upper deck. When on the next day the hands were normally employed cleaning up after painting, scrubbing decks and polishing brightwork it is certain that everyone realised that something special was in the wind but it was not until that evening that they could be told that the King was visiting his fleet on the morrow and would come on board *Belfast* and inspect the Ship's Company.

And so it happened – H. M. King George VI came to Scapa and went on board many of his ships including *Belfast* when he walked round the upper deck inspecting the Ship's Company and later had

King George VI visited HMS Belfast *at Scapa several times. On 13 May 1944, he was on the bridge with Rear Admiral FHG Dalrymple-Hamilton, who was to command the squadron looking on, as she sailed around the assembled ships at Scapa prior to D-Day (pages 77–81). Photograph courtesy of Simon Tosswill from the private collection of his father Captain Richard Tosswill RN, Executive Officer HMS* Belfast *1944.*

tea in the Admiral's cabin. When the King left the ship the Ship's Company manned the upperworks and gave Three Cheers for His Majesty the King. The following day the fleet went to sea, and in line ahead, manned ship and cheered the King as the Destroyer taking him back to Scapa Flow steamed down the line; a memorable occasion for everyone in the fleet in wartime.

It was readily apparent to all that Admiral Burnett had indeed enabled his flagship to steal a march on the rest of the fleet because *Belfast* was the only ship with a fresh coat of paint, really looking her best on this occasion; and His Majesty commented on her appearance accordingly. As a result of this achievement *Belfast* got the nickname in the fleet of "The Tiddley B".

SINKING THE *SCHARNHORST* (THE BATTLE OF NORTH CAPE)

Action of 26 December 1943 – sinking of the Scharnhorst

This extract is from the account of the Scharnhorst action written shortly afterwards by HMS Belfast*'s commander (second-in-command) from 1942 until 1944, Capt Philip Welby-Everard DSC, OBE, DL RN. While written mainly for his wife and family, his account is reproduced here with the kind permission of his son, Roger Welby-Everard.*

AN INTRODUCTION

As far as the action itself was concerned I, as Commander, had virtually nothing to do; my action station is on top of the after superstructure at what is called the Emergency Conning Position, a rather draughty and exposed place, but from which I have all the necessary communications to take over control of the ship in the event of damage to the bridge. I'm also responsible for what is called Damage Control if the ship is hit and files have to be dealt with etc. Fortunately I was not called upon to do any of these things as the ship was never hit and therefore my duties were limited to the promulgating of information on the progress of the action to the majority of the ship's company who are between decks and see nothing, and, as it was a long action, organising supply of food to the men at their action stations when opportunity offered.

Although I was therefore little more than an onlooker of the action itself, it was a special interest for two reasons. Firstly, it was the first action of its kind, being fought continuously in either complete darkness or in the dim light that is all you get for a few hours in these latitudes at that time of year, in which full use was made of the modern fire control developments for which I was responsible during my two years at the Admiralty. Secondly, the ship and her company were in action for the first time and in the last 18 months all my energies had been directed towards producing an efficient unit from the half repaired hulk that I joined in June 1942, and the 900-odd inexperienced men that commissioned her the following November.

So, with only slight exaggeration, I can say I was watching the men I had trained, in my ship, use the instruments I had produced two and three years before.

Phase I

Belfast was doing what had almost become a routine operation, mainly covering a North Russian convoy; in company with us was *Norfolk* and *Sheffield*, and of course the close escort of Corvettes and Destroyers with the convoy itself. We had already been at sea some days, all the time in the Second Degree of Readiness, which meant that everyone lives and sleeps at their action stations (or very close), except when a portion at a time go away for meals.

On the morning of Sunday the 26th of December, the weather was inclined to be rough but not cold for the area as the temperature was above freezing point. At 1040 (ship's time), we detected the presence of an unknown vessel in the vicinity, and shortly afterwards, *Norfolk* sighted her vaguely (it was still fairly dark) and opened fire. I'm fairly certain that *Norfolk* got a hit with her third salvo as I saw a flash as I watched her salvo fall. Being fitted with tracers, you can watch the shells all the way in the dark.

The enemy opened fire at *Norfolk*, and also hit her, though we did not hear this until later. The damage was not so serious and she had a few casualties. *Sheffield*, who was next in line to *Norfolk* fired one or two salvos. But during this phase, we saw nothing and did not fire. The enemy turned away and ran for it at 30 knots and the action did not last long as we turned back to position near the convoy, our

object being its protection. We lost contact with the enemy shortly after 12 o'clock.

Belfast had as yet played no part, but we were all keyed up as at last it seemed that it was the *Scharnhorst* and our as yet un-encountered enemy of the last twelve months. I was able to broadcast that we thought it was the *Scharnhorst* this time though were not yet sure. The position was a little obscure, for a straggler from the convoy, that had failed to make a diversionary alteration ordered shortly before, was also detected and all was not quite clear at that time.

What did we think? Would *Scharnhorst* return? Would she fight it out with us? How should we get on? Knowing as we did that none of the 6 inch or 8 inch shells of us three cruisers could penetrate her armour whereas her 11 inch could knock us to pieces. The *Duke of York* was still a long way away, could we hold her until the *Duke*'s 14 inch could be brought to bear? Those were the thoughts running through my mind.

However, for the moment *Scharnhorst* had legged it at 30 knots and in view of the time and the possibility of action shortly, the moment seemed right to arrange some food. So I put our action messing organisation into force and we all got a meal at our action stations – hot soup, meat pies and a jam tart.

Phase II

I was back on the bridge, where I stay until action starts so as to keep in touch with the situation, when just after two o'clock we detected her again coming in to find the convoy. This time all three ships were in a position to open fire and no time was wasted in doing so, and *Scharnhorst* soon replied. Conditions were difficult, the best of the daylight was over and one never caught more than a fleeting glimpse of her or only saw the flash of her guns. All ships claim to have got a hit, but her salvos, though falling close did not touch us. Once again *Scharnhorst* wouldn't take it and turned away, this time to the southward towards her base, and as we knew, the *Duke of York*. This time, we all three closed to keep in touch and to ensure that the Commander-in-Chief in the *D of Y* should catch her. After a time both sides stopped firing as the range had opened and it was then a waste of ammunition to go on. The firing period lasted about 20 minutes.

Could we drive her into the arms of the *Duke of York* or would she turn round and rend us and escape that way? For four hours this chase continued, *Sheffield* dropped back due to a temporary engine defect, and *Norfolk* dropped back. *Belfast* put on her best speed, developing more horsepower than ever before, but we slowly lost ground though still keeping touch and continuing to report her every move to the C-in-C.

As the time approached for the *Duke of York* to get in touch it got very exciting but I was able to get a cup of tea and biscuits round to all quarters during this period.

Then at last, the *D of Y* got in touch and we watched and waited for the first salvos which we saw about 10 minutes to seven o'clock, the *Scharnhorst* then being about 11 miles ahead of us.

During this agonising period, everyone below was wondering what was going on. All I could tell them was that the *Duke* was in the right place and would cut her off if she went on. I didn't tell them that, during the last hour or so, we were by ourselves and had she turned round it would have been a hot corner for us!

Phase III

"The *Duke of York* has opened fire" – that sent a thrill through the ship when I was able to broadcast it at last.

Scharnhorst immediately turned to the eastward and went off at her best speed. That enabled us to close the range again as we watched the flashes and salvos of the two big ships, and those of *Jamaica* the cruiser with the *Duke*.

At about seven o'clock *Scharnhorst* opened fire again at us and we turned to a parallel course firing ourselves when good opportunities offered.

It was now of course quite dark and although our latest gadgets enable us to fire 'blind' this is with only limited accuracy and a short range and the *Duke* never got closer than 5 or 6 miles. Would she get a hit that would reduce *Scharnhorst*'s speed? That was the question.

Over an hour this action went on, both ships firing quite slowly owing to the difficult conditions – whether the *Scharnhorst* was hit during this period I don't know – the *Duke* wasn't except for a chip off one mast. Slowly the *Scharnhorst* increased the range with her superior speed and our hearts fell as it seemed that she might get away.

The German battleship Scharnhorst. *(Getty Images)*

At about 8.20 both ships ceased fire and the day seemed lost, but the Commander-in-Chief had sent in his destroyers to attack and had only stopped firing as they closed. At 8.30 *Scharnhorst* opened fire again with every weapon she had, in every direction, and another thrilling moment when I was able to broadcast – "The Destroyers are now attacking".

Phase IV

The *Scorpion*, *Savage*, *Saumarez* and *Stordt* (Norwegian) were the four destroyers with the C-in-C, and they made a gallant attack in face of very heavy fire and got at least three torpedo hits which slowed the *Scharnhorst* and allowed the *Duke* to close the range. It was not long then before I was able to announce "The *Scharnhorst* is on fire" as the *Duke*'s 14 inch guns soon turned her into a blazing wreck once the range was short enough for her to see the enemy.

Scharnhorst put up a gallant fight – firing airguns to the end – *Jamaica* was then ordered to sink her with torpedoes, and at about 9.30 we fired three torpedoes, one of which we claim to have hit, and this was the last hit as she turned over and sank.

So went down the last of the German's fast armoured ships that was in a fit state to go to sea. The Destroyers closed and rescued survivors, I don't know how many but from those we saw on rafts etc in the water I should say that it was less than 100.

It was about 11 o'clock before we finally left the scene. So for some 12 hours we had been keyed up to the top pitch by a sequence of thrilling events. We still had to keep alert that night as *Scharnhorst* may have had Destroyers in the area or an air attack might arrive as we were only some 50 miles from the enemy occupied Norwegian bases. However, we got some food about midnight and the sailors their tot of rum and so ended an eventful day.

The adversaries

German

Scharnhorst (Kapitän zur See Hintze), flagship of Rear-Admiral Bey.

Battle cruiser, 26,000 tons, 9 × 11 in., 12 × 5·9 in.

6 Narvik Destroyers: Fleet Destroyers, 4 × 5·9 in., 8 × 21 in. torpedoes, 38 knots.

Z–29 (Kapitän zur See Johanneson) 4th Destroyer Flottilla Leader Z–30, Z–33, Z–34 and Z–38

British

Force Two (Admiral Bruce Fraser)

Duke of York (Captain The Hon. Guy Russell RN)

Battleship, 35,000 tons, 10 × 14 in., 16 × 5·25 in.

Jamaica Cruiser, 9 × 6 in., 8 × 4 in., 6 × 21 in. torpedoes

Destroyer Screen

1st. Sub-Division

Savage (Commander Meyrick) Divisional Leader. 4 × 4·7 in., 8 × 21 in. torpedoes, 32 knots

Saumarez

Scorpion

2nd. Sub-Division

Stord (Norwegian)

Force One (CS 10. Vice-Admiral Burnett in Belfast)

***Belfast** (Captain F. R. Parham) 12 × 6 in., 12 × 4 in., 6 × 21 in. torpedoes*

Norfolk 8 × 8 in., 8 × 4 in., 3 × 21 in. torpedoes
Sheffield 12 × 6 in., 8 × 4 in., 6 × 21 in. torpedoes
Destroyer Screen (36th Division)
71st. Sub-Division
Matchless 6 × 4·7 in. (twins) 33 knots
Musketeer (Commander Fisher) Divisional Leader 6 × 4·7 in. (twins) 33 knots
72nd. Sub-Division
Opportune 4 × 4·7 in. All 8 × 21 in. torpedoes, 32 knots
Convoy Escort JWB5B
Onslow (Captain McCoy) D 17 with 9 assorted destroyers, 1 minesweeper, 2 corvettes
Convoy Escort RA55A
Milne (Captain Campbell) with 6 assorted destroyers, 1 minesweeper, 3 corvettes (1 Norwegian)

SINKING THE *TIRPITZ* – OPERATION *TUNGSTEN*

The *Belfast* was part of the fleet that put the *Tirpitz* out of action in Altenfjord, Norway, when on 3 April 1944, 42 Barracudas from the carriers 140 miles (225km) away with attendant fighter protection attacked and rendered her inoperable. After a number of follow-up attacks, the final attack by RAF Lancasters on 12 November 1944 damaged her to such an extent that she capsized and was never a threat again.

1944 – D-DAY LANDINGS

Belfast, flying the flag of R Adm Frederick Dalrymple-Hamilton, was the headquarters ship of Force E, part of the invasion force of France spearheaded by the Normandy D-Day coastal assaults. Her task was to bombard the resisting enemy forces and support the British and Canadian landings on Gold and Juno beaches. *Belfast* sailed from the River Clyde, arriving off the Normandy coast early on 6 June – without the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who only abandoned the idea of sailing in *Belfast* after the personal intervention of King George VI. Bad weather delayed the start until 6 June when at 5.30am *Belfast* opened fire on a German artillery battery at Ver-sur-Mer (poignantly ten miles from Bayeux, of tapestry fame), suppressing the guns until they were captured by the Green Howards, the 7th battalion

of British infantry. On 12 June *Belfast* supported Canadian troops moving inland from Juno Beach and returned to Portsmouth on 16 June to replenish her ammunition. She returned two days later for further bombardment. However, during the night of 6 July German E-Boats tried to attack and *Belfast* weighed anchor and hid behind a smoke screen. With the fighting front now beyond *Belfast*'s gun range she sailed for Scapa on 10 July. Her 6in. guns had fired 1,996 rounds.

Adm Ramsey was the commander-in-chief of the Allied Naval Expeditionary Force that took the Normandy beaches during D-Day. This was his message to the sailors involved.

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY ISSUED TO EACH OFFICER AND MAN OF THE ALLIED NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

It is to be our privilege to take part in the greatest amphibious operation in history – a necessary preliminary to the opening of the western front in Europe which in conjunction with the great Russian advance, will crush the fighting power of Germany. This is the opportunity which we have long awaited and which must be seized and pursued with relentless determination: the hopes and prayers of the free world and of the enslaved people of Europe will be with us and we cannot fail them. Our task, in conjunction with merchant navies of the united nations, and supported by the allied forces, is to carry the allied expeditionary force to the continent, to establish it there in a secure bridgehead and to build it up and maintain it at a rate which will outmatch that of the enemy.

Let no one underestimate the magnitude of the task. The Germans are desperate and will resist fiercely until we out-manoeuvre and out-fight them, which we can and will do. To every one of you will be given the opportunity to show by his determination and resource that dauntless spirit of resolution which individually strengthens and inspires and which, collectively, is irresistible.

I count on every man to do his utmost to ensure the success of this great enterprise which is the climax of the European war.

Good luck to you all and god speed.

(Signed) B. H. Ramsey ADMIRAL
ALLIED NAVAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Winston Churchill reluctantly agreed that he would not go on board HMS Belfast *for the D-Day landings after King George VI had written the letter shown here to him personally, but that HMS* Belfast *should be given the privilege of opening the bombardment. There is, however, some controversy over this as it is believed that another ship opened fire just before, by mistake.*

Buckingham Palace
June 2nd 1944

My Dear Winston,

I want to make one more appeal to you not to go to sea on D-Day. Please consider my own position. I am a younger man than you, I am a sailor, and as King I am the Head of all three Services. There is nothing I would like better than to go to sea, but I have agreed to stay at home; is it fair that you should then do exactly what I should have liked to do myself?

You said yesterday afternoon that it would be a fine thing for the King to lead his troops into battle, as in the old days; if the King cannot do this, it does not seem to be right that his Prime Minister should take his place. Then there is your own position. You will see very little, you will run a considerable risk, you will be inaccessible at a critical time, when vital decisions might have to be taken, and however unobtrusive you may be, your presence on board is bound to be a very heavy additional responsibility to the Admiral and Captain.

As I said in my previous letter, your being there would add immeasurably to my anxieties, and your being there without consulting your colleagues in the Cabinet would put them in a very difficult position, which they would justifiably resent.

I ask you most earnestly to consider the whole question again, and not let your personal wishes, which I very well understand, lead you to depart from your own high standard of duty to the state.

Believe me,

Your very sincere Friend
George R.I.

This 'Report on the Meteorological Implications in the selection of the day for the Allied Invasion of France June 1944' shows the dilemma facing the supreme allied commander, Gen Dwight Eisenhower, and his staff over when to give the order for the D-Day landings. HMS Belfast, *as the directing ship for the landings on Juno and Gold beaches, was directly affected by this decision.*

Declassified 1976
POA D.S. STNUSCOU.
U.S.O. HMIG
REPORT
ON THE METEOROLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE SELECTION OF THE DAY FOR THE ALLIED INVASION OF FRANCE JUNE 1944.
(iii) Decision to proceed on 6th June.

As regards the decision to proceed with the plan after 24 hours' postponement on the basis of a meteorological forecast presented on Sunday evening, 4th June, Section VII (a), shows that the actual conditions in the hours immediately preceding and following the time of landings, though not the ideal or even the complete minimum requirements, were decidedly better than those on the preceding and succeeding nights.

The surface wind, and therefore the sea roughness, had moderated during Monday evening; and the amount of the cloud and the height of its base at various times of the night and early morning were such as to allow all phases of the assault to be carried out according to plan.

In particular, the conditions for airborne landings were somewhat better than forecast in that the cloud ceiling was at the unusual height of 4000–5000 feet; and by the time the heavy bombers were due to operate, the cloud was sufficiently broken to allow use of visual technique. The medium and fighter bombers were not hampered, nor were the spotting aircraft. The wind conditions on the beaches were within the limits set, though the sea and surf still suffered from the stronger winds of Sunday and Monday.

That the weather deteriorated again during Tuesday and continued poor into Wednesday could not have surprised the Supreme Commander and his Staff; considerable emphasis was put on this deterioration at the meetings leading to the final decision (Section V).

***Belfast*'s War Diary: D-Day June/July 1944**

June 6-9	Bombardment—assault support
June 12	Area JUNO, bombarding with *Diadem*, p.m. Withdrew to sail for Portsmouth
June 16	Ammunitioning at Portsmouth
June 18	Sails from Portsmouth for JUNO area
	Bombarding
June 19	The Great Gale
June 22	Overlord threatened—Mulberry harbour justifies itself
June 23	Bombarding
June 30	Bombarding with *Rodney* and *Argonaut*
July 6	Bombarding in JUNO area with *Emerald*, *Roberts* (monitor) and *Danae*
	Danger from human torpedoes and explosive motor boats, and oyster mines
July 8	Montgomery begins offensive and breaks out from Caen. *Belfast*, *Roberts*, *Rodney* bombarding in support
July 10	At sea
July 12	Arrives Scapa Flow

WARTIME MEMORIES OF HMS *BELFAST*

Canada arranged to take over the Cruiser "HMS Uganda" after repairs, and provided a trained crew to man it. I was part of a draft of "all ranks" sent to the Royal Navy for training on cruisers. I joined HMS *Belfast*, my first ship in November 1943, and became a crane driver. My Action Station was in "B" Shell Room.

The ship had two cranes in 1943, originally fitted to recover the Walrus aircraft after landing alongside.

The cranes were fitted just forward of the 4" guns. The operating platforms were about eight feet above the deck. In December, on our way to Murmansk, we anchored in Seydisfjord, Iceland, and I spent a forenoon watch on the crane. It was very cold with a strong wind and a six-foot swell. A boat came alongside, with an injured man in a basket stretcher who needed medical treatment. The crane had a heavy hook, and with the boat bouncing about, I was concerned that the hook might drop onto the stretcher, but the boat's crew managed to get the stretcher's sling onto the hook and I got the casualty onboard safely. I was chilled to the bone, and when relieved, I was late getting below for lunch. A 3-badge AB asked me where I had been, and when I told him, he handed me his rum issue and said, "Here, you need this more than I do". That was my first taste of rum and it lit a fire in my belly, which warmed me up. I do not remember the AB's name, but I've never forgotten his kindness.

In the Kola Inlet, Murmansk, I went ashore with some lads and we went up into the hills where we met two Russian soldiers on skis. A shipmate said as I was a Canadian I must know how to ski, and they wanted a demonstration. For the price of a few cigarettes, one soldier gave me his skis. The harness was quite primitive, with a strap over the toe and one around the heel. They were suitable only for cross-country skiing but the lads insisted that I go down the hill. At the bottom was a group of Petty Officers. I had a good fast run downhill, but at the bottom I tripped on sticky snow and collided with the group. They cursed me "for being a daft Colonial" but I think my shipmates thought it was hilarious and the Russians had a big grin when I returned the skis.

Russia was paying the Allies for raw materials in gold bullion. Before we left Russia, a barge came alongside and I picked up many

boxes of gold bars. I remember these made a large pile on deck. When I visited the ship recently, I learned that the shipment amounted to 17 tons. At today's price, $1420 per ounce, the value would have been $772,480.000.00

During the Battle of the North Cape with SCHARNHORST, action in the shell rooms was hectic keeping the shell rings full while the guns were firing, but slack when the guns were still. An Officer on the bridge kept the crew informed about the battle. He told us the ship was making a torpedo attack. We would hear the Torpedo Officer giving the order to fire, and if we counted to 18, we would hear the result. I was sitting on the deck, leaning against the bulkhead, while counting. I heard two very distinct "bumps", which I'm sure were two hits. The ship reversed course to bring our other tubes to bear, but the SCHARNHORST was gone.

On D-Day, the Allies made their landings in Normandy and BELFAST was there to fire on the coastal defences. As the troops moved inland, the ship sent a signalman to work with the Army as a spotter, and to report the coordinates of targets, i.e. tanks, trucks, troop concentrations, for BELFAST to engage with broadsides. After several weeks, the beach was covered in debris. Shore parties from ships were sent to the Mulberry Harbour and on to the beach by "ducks". The "duck" I was in, pulled up on the sand to disconnect the propeller and engage the gears. I stood up on the back of it to get a view when the "duck" jerked forward and I "landed in France on the seat of my pants". I got back on the vehicle and we were taken to an area of the beach needing a cleanup.

The Germans had a mobile gun at the northern end of the beachhead, which harassed the activity on the beach and on the anchored ships. One of its shells landed in shallow water about 50 yards from us. As it exploded, we prostrated ourselves and the shrapnel rattled off the side of the beached landing craft behind us.

Later when our section of the beach was clean, I walked up to the village and looked into one of the houses. There was an open window facing the beach, and on the windowsill lay five rounds of rifle ammunition. The bullets were made of wood and dyed in different colours. I had no idea what they were used for, and I've never seen any reference to this type of ammunition.

When our guns were no longer required to support the troops, BELFAST returned to England. I returned to Canada for leave and then joined UGANDA on commissioning as a Canadian ship. We sailed to join the Pacific Fleet waging war against Japan.

Contributed by HMS *Belfast* Association Veteran number 661, Able Seaman R. W. Brown, Royal Canadian Navy (from *Seahorse Magazine*, summer 2011).

Chapter 3

HMS *Belfast*'s time in the tropics

HMS *BELFAST*'S REFIT: SUNDERLAND JULY 1944 TO 18 APRIL 1945

On Belfast*'s arrival in the Tyne, Capt Parham, after nearly two strenuous years in command, handed over on 29 July to Capt R. M. Dick, CBE, DSC, RN, who was to command her over the next two years.*

In addition to improving her accommodation for the tropics, the object of the refit carried out by the Middle Dock and High Shields Engineering Company was to modernise her with the latest weapons and fire control, in particular for defence against the Japanese 'suicide-planes', the kamikazes, although in the event Japan finally surrendered on 15 August after Hitler had shot himself in his Berlin bunker and the dropping of two atomic bombs.

In April 1945 Belfast *carried out sea trials after completion of her nine-month refit.*

May 1945: Record of alterations and additions

4 in. HA Armament

S3 and P3 mountings removed. Remaining Mountings S1, S2, P1, P2, modified to Remote Power Control (RPC). Auto-Selector-Alignment was fitted to the HACS Mark IV Tables.

Pom-Poms

2 x eight-barrelled Mark VIII guns on Mark VI mountings. RP10 (Remote Power Controlled). One each side of mainmast on Pom-pom deck controlled by: 2 Pom-pom Directors, Mark IV with Gyro Rate Units Mark 1 + Type 282 radar, mounted on sponsons high up on the forward edge of the after funnel.

4 x four-barrelled Mark VIII guns on Mark VII mountings, RP50, sited each side:

1 forward edge of Pom-pom deck, just abaft for'd funnel.

1 abreast after HADT on after superstructure controlled by:

4 Pom-pom Directors Mark IV with Gyro Rate Units Mark I and Type 282 radar, sited each side: 1 on sponsons, just aft of the for'd Pom-pom mounting on Pom-pom deck, 1 on after superstructure in sponsons forward of the after HADT.

20 mm. Oerlikons

Twelve twin mountings fitted and re-sited as follows:

6 x Twin Mark V 20 mm. powered-mountings with tachymetric sights

6 newly designed hand-worked mountings with tachymetric sights

These six twin mountings were sited as follows:

1 lower bridge wings.

1 lower bridge, after corners, to replace 44 in. searchlights which were landed with the after pair.

1 B gun deck, 1 abreast forward funnel, 1 abreast after funnel, 1 on quarterdeck (2 mountings abreast of each other).

In addition, two single Mark VII mountings were sited one each side of the after superstructure, in protected sponsons.

Magazine stowage was enlarged.

Radar

In May 1945 she carried:

Type	242—IFF	
„	243—IFF	
„	253	IFF
„	277	AA Height-finding and surface warning
„	281	Air warning
„	282	Pom-pom Directors and blind barrage
„	283	
„	274	6 in. Armament
„	285	HA
„	293Q	Close range height-finding and surface warning.

44 in. Searchlights: all landed
Aircraft: Hangar converted into recreation and accommodation spaces
Catapult: removed
DCT Rangefinder: for bombardment use only
Damage Control Headquarters: A secondary HQ was built on the port side, below the armoured deck, on the after side of 158 bulkhead, abreast "B" boiler room
Echo Sounder: was re-sited in the bridge plotting room
Depth Charges: 6 (15 spares)
Accommodation: The "internals" of the ship were greatly modified to make the heat of the tropics more tolerable

An interesting alteration was: "To improve laundry facilities by installing a shirt press and single sleeve form."

An elementary Action Information Organisation (AIO), was introduced into the Operations Room to sift and display all visual, radar and signal information for the Command to assess the threat and act upon, previously assimilated by the Action Plot.

Oil Fuel Replenishment and Transfer at Sea
The vast sea distances at sea in the Pacific had produced the Fleet Train of the huge American Task Force. It was vital therefore that *Belfast* should be modernised to the latest developments and standards of oiling at sea and she was brought up to date during this refit.

Replenishment speed was about nine knots.

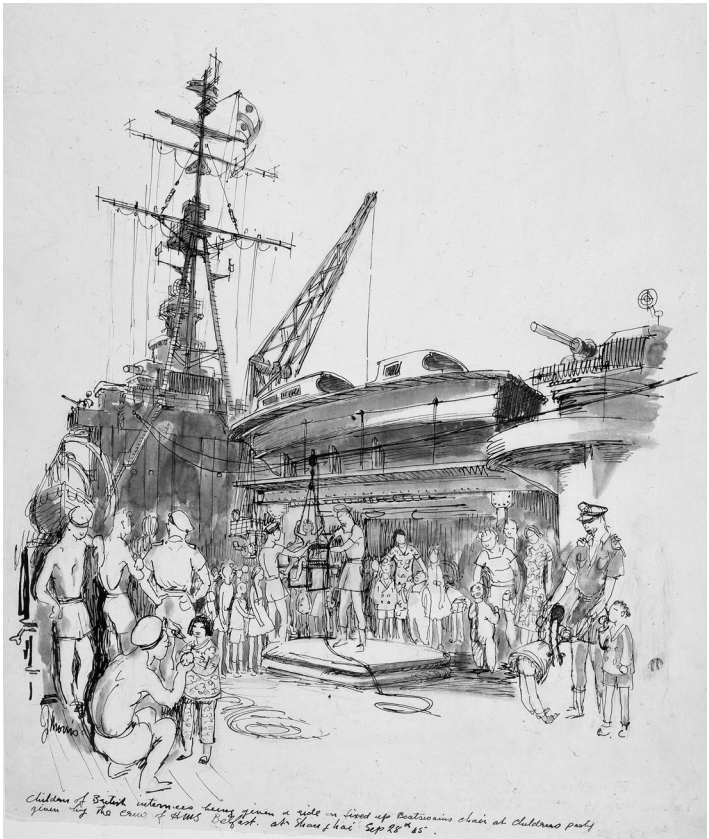
Paravanes:

6 Mark VII Bodies with:	6–31 knot planes
	2–22 knot planes
	4–16 knot planes

The Starboard paravane towed from the for'd chain.
The Port paravane towed from the after chain.

PEACETIME DUTIES

At the war's end *Belfast* still managed to do sterling work in helping to evacuate the unfortunate emaciated survivors of the Japanese prisoner of war and civilian internment camps in Shanghai. In September 1945 the officers and men organised a party for the children in the


Children of British internees being given a ride on a specially rigged up Boatswains chair at Childrens party given by the crew of HMS Belfast. at Shanghai Sept 28th 45.

Children of British internee survivors in Shanghai enjoying a party on board thrown by the officers and sailors of the Belfast *on 28 September 1945. This drawing shows a bosun's chair rigged as a children's slide.*

(Image courtesy of James Morris, Getty Images)

camps. The most popular item on the menu was chocolate, which most of the children had never tasted before; the men even searched their lockers and every last piece of chocolate was consumed. *Belfast* continued on peacekeeping duties until the autumn of 1947, when she returned home for a well-earned rest and refit.

THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War (25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953) was fought between North Korea, with the support of China and the Soviet Union, and South Korea with the support of 21 member countries of the United Nations (UN), principally the USA but including the UK, Royal Canadian, Royal Australian and Royal New Zealand forces. Two days after North Korea invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950 the UN sent a combined NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) fleet and troops in their support, while China assisted North Korea with Soviet Union help.

Korea had been ruled by Imperial Japan from 1910 until, in August 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on it. As a result it was agreed that the Soviet Union would liberate Korea north of the 38th parallel while US forces subsequently would move into the south. By 1948, as a product of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA, Korea was divided into two regions with separate governments. Both claimed to be the legitimate government of all of Korea, and neither accepted the border as permanent. On 27 June, the United Nations Security Council authorised UN forces to repel a North Korean invasion.

Ships that served with HMS *Belfast* in Korean waters

HMS *Belfast* was part of Britain's naval contribution to implement the UN's decision to stop the invasion of South Korea by North Korea. The size and international nature of the intervention is shown by this list in the ship's commission record of US, Dutch, New Zealand, Australian, Canadian and British warships and Republic of Korea patrol craft that operated at the same time as HMS *Belfast* in Korean waters; as did the aircraft carriers HMS *Theseus*, *Glory*, *Ocean* and HMAS *Sydney*.

USS	*Missouri*	HMNZS	*Taupo*
USS	*New Jersey*	HMNZS	*Rotoiti*
USS	*Wisconsin*	HMNZS	*Hawea*
USS	*Iowa*	HMAS	*Warramunga*
USS	*Bataan*	HMAS	*Bataan*
USS	*Rendova*	HMAS	*Sydney*
USS	*Badoeing Strait*	HMAS	*Murchison*
USS	*Bairoko*	HMAS	*Condamine*
USS	*St. Paul*	HMAS	*Tobruk*
USS	*Toledo*	HMAS	*Anzac*
USS	*Rochester*	HMCS	*Athabaskan*
USS	*Manchester*	HMCS	*Cayuga*
USS	*Ozborn*	HMCS	*Nootka*
USS	*Lind*	HMCS	*Sioux*
USS	*Hank*	HMS	*Ceylon*
USS	*Fletcher*	HMS	*Cossack*
USS	*Apache*	HMS	*Constance*
USS	*J. A. Bole*	HMS	*Concord*
USS	*Lowry*	HMS	*Charity*
USS	*Chevalier*	HMS	*Consort*
USS	*Gurke*	HMS	*Comus*
USS	*Shelton*	HMS	*Cockade*
USS	*Porterfield*	HMS	*Kenya*
USS	*Eversole*	HMS	*Theseus*
USS	*Hanna*	HMS	*Glory*
USS	*Collett*	HMS	*Ocean*
USS	*Colohan*	HMS	*Cardigan Bay*
USS	*Hanson*	HMS	*Whitesand Bay*

USS	*McDermott*	HMS	*St. Bride's Bay*
USS	*Wantuek*	HMS	*Morecambe Bay*
USS	*Sicily*	HMS	*Mount's Bay*
USS	*H. W. Tucker*	HMS	*Amethyst*
USS	*Brush*	HMS	*Alacrity*
USS	*Current*	HMS	*Crane*
USS	*Swallow*	HMS	*Unicorn*
USS	*Hart.*	RFA	*Wave Sovereign*
USS	*Kimberley*	RFA	*Wave Baron*
HMNS	*Evertsen*	RFA	*Wave Chief*
HMNS	*Van Galen*	RFA	*Wave Premier*
HMNS	*Piet Hein*	RFA	*Green Ranger*
HMNZS	*Tutira*	RFA	*Brown Ranger*

Various LSTs, LSMRs etc. and Patrol Craft of the ROK Navy.

Breaking news

Conrad Jenkin, who was to become a rear admiral, but at the time was the sub-lieutenant in charge of the gunroom as well as foc'sle divisional officer and 6" gun control officer of HMS Belfast *in the 1950–52 commission, recounts the moment* Belfast *heard they were at war with Korea.*

In late June 1950, HMS *Belfast* was anchored in Hakodate in northern Japan, nearing the end of a cruise round that country. As the Sub of the Gunroom, responsible for the dozen or so Midshipmen on board, I had been invited one evening to dine with the Admiral, Rear Admiral Andrewes, Flag Officer Second in Command Far East Fleet (who retired in 1957 as Admiral Sir William 'Bill' Andrewes KBE CB DSO). He was flying his flag on board and was dining with the Commanding Officer, the Captain, Sir Aubrey St Clair Ford Bt DSO RN. There we all were, dressed in our formal evening uniform 'bum-freezers', seated round the great polished table covered with silver and all the bits and pieces of a smart naval dinner and with

stewards hovering in the background, when there was a knock on the door and a signalman walked in, clutching a bit of paper in his hand. Looking slightly flustered, he walked to the end of the table where the Admiral was sitting and handed him the bit of paper; the Admiral read it – and read it again – and then looked up at the rest of us and said "Gentlemen, we are at war with North Korea".

We sailed the following day, preparing for war; all the guns were readied, the big 6" and the smaller 4", ammunition was fuzed and off we went south, awaiting our orders. Only days later we found ourselves off the east coast of North Korea bombarding their trains as they emerged from tunnels, hoping to hit them before they disappeared into the next tunnel. As the 6" Control Officer high above the Bridge, I remember feeling it all quite exciting though for the life of me, I don't remember ever hitting one.

Personal experiences

These extracts are taken from Rear Admiral J.L. Blackham, C.B., D.L. Memoirs Of A Naval Life *and recall his experiences as the then commander (second-in-command) of HMS* Belfast *between his joining in June 1951 and leaving on 26 November 1952 during the Korean War. This was the same period as that covered by Alasdair Paton, whose extracts from his midshipman's journal are printed later on, after both transited in the troopship* Dilwara. *His memoirs were left by him to the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth, and these extracts are recounted with the kind permission of his son, V Adm Sir Jeremy Blackham KCB.*

I finally left England in May 1951 in Her Majesty's Transport "Dilwara", a British-India passenger liner commandeered for war service, where I found myself designated Officer Commanding Naval Draft, and so entitled to a cabin to myself which was quite a luxury for a relatively junior officer in a trooper. It was not an arduous task, keeping an eye on a body of about 120 sailors and a dozen officers, and accompanying the ship's Captain on his daily rounds of the ship every forenoon. We had no trouble from our charges and arrived without event in Singapore, where I joined "Belfast", which had just completed a docking and short refit period.

Our Captain was Sir Aubrey St Clair-Ford (Bart), (8 April 1950 – 22 November 1951) a round and jolly man with a high colour

in his face, so that he was widely known by a nickname, "Aubrey Strawberry"!

I relieved the Commander, W.W. Fitzroy, who left the day I arrived, and I found myself very much alone in my first seagoing job as a Commander. I well remember my first day, when I "cleared lower deck" to show myself to the ship's company and give them a short speech on my philosophy for conduct and discipline. Most of them had already done a period in Korea, so I could not tell them what they were in for, however it seemed to go down alright, and I set about the task of getting to know my way around the ship and, equally important, getting to know as many of the ship's company as I could by name.

We had a couple of days in Hong Kong for fuel and food, and I was happy to find my old friend "Jenny" and employ her again, with her girls as our "side party", with a promise that she would do so whenever we came back to Hong Kong, for "R and R", *(rest and recreation)*, and then we went on to Sasebo in Japan.

We had three cruisers, also two light fleet aircraft carriers, and a number of destroyers, frigates and minesweepers, some of them from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as part of the United Nations Force under whose authority we were to operate. On arrival in Sasebo we embarked Rear Admiral A.K. Scott-Moncrieff, the Flag Officer 2nd-in-command, Far East Station, and became his flagship for the duration of our time out there.

The general plan was that the U.S. Navy operated on the East coast of Korea, while the Royal Navy operated on the West coast. At that time, the war between North and South Korea had settled down to something of a stalemate along the 38th parallel line. On the West side of the mainland there was a considerable British Army force sited on the 38th parallel between the rival warring armies, and we used to have some contact with them when we visited Inchon. For example we used to invite some officers and soldiers to fly down to spend a few days on board and enjoy the luxury of baths and good food, both of which were lacking where they were stationed.

The broad picture was that South Korea had been invaded by Communist North Korea, and the United Nations had intervened

to stop the conflict, an artificial intelligence frontier having been established on the 38th parallel, right across the country. Allied military forces had become established on this boundary, but there were frequent skirmishes along this line between North and South Korean forces. There were, of course, main railway and road supply lines coming from the north, and a number of military dumps and areas within our operational area.

On the 38th parallel, but about eight miles from the coast, i.e. outside territorial waters, were two islands called respectively Paengnyong-Do and Taecheong-Do, both uninhabited by Koreans. On the former was established an American Marine detachment. These were under the command of a U.S. Marine Major by the name of "Ehrghott". His detachment's task was to gather intelligence of North Korean Army formations and movements on the mainland in this area. In this context the code name for this officer was "Leopard", by which he was generally known in conversation or signals. One of the means by which this was achieved was by landing individual officers, perhaps accompanied by a South Korean interpreter, to make undercover reports on these matters, either by radio or by personal report on return.

One of our regular activities was to carry out frequent bombardments, with our 5 inch guns, up to ten miles inland from the light fleet carrier advised by "HMS Leopard", and using Fleet Air Arm aircraft from the light fleet carrier always on station about 30 miles to seaward of us. In fact there was no air opposition in our area, so we had no worries on that score.

However the rumour began to circulate among our sailors that we were just choosing village targets from the chart, and bombarding and killing unarmed families! In fact I had several sailors who believed this, who were members of turrets' crews or down in the magazines supplying the shells to the guns, and who refused duty for this reason. They were, of course, brought before me charged with refusing duty, a crime for which I should have considered drastic individual and unpleasant retribution. They were all young men, and I knew severe punishment would not stifle this rumour. On the other hand I could not tell them in detail about the underground system of intelligence I have described for fear

that they might talk ashore in their cups and so endanger the lives of undercover men! And so I had to indicate that we had, from American secret intelligence sources, knowledge of real military targets, and asked them if they would be averse to being the crew of our 4 inch anti-aircraft guns, which we manned in case of attack on us! They all agreed gladly, and so it was arranged. But I warned them that any further spreading of the rumour would be regarded by me as a serious offence and dealt with "by the book". Luckily, about 10 days later, we were called upon to rush up by night well north of the 38th parallel, into the mouth of the Yalu River, to bring off one of these brave young men for whom the area was getting too hot to be healthy. And by the time we got back to South Korean waters and returned him to "Leopard" the story had gone round the ship, and my action with the "Doubting Thomas's" seemed to have been warmly approved by the lower deck as being wise and compassionate! We had no further trouble of this sort.

Then I did a very foolish thing! About 2 a.m. I went out alone onto the port waist to see if the quarterdeck awning, stowed overhead there, was secure. I had hardly arrived when a vast wave came crashing down onto the deck, picked me up and carried me over the side! I thought I was lost, for even if anyone had seen or heard my shout there was no chance of my being picked up. However, by some miracle the wave carried me aft and burst inboard over the quarterdeck, dumping me there up against the guard rails, from where, somewhat bruised and very wet, I managed to get back inside and find my way to my cabin! I ascribe this miracle to the fact that I had my son's "birth caul" with me, it being well known that such a talisman is a sure preventative against a ship sinking! I have it still.

At the beginning of October we had a change from our normal routine by going up the East Coast of Korea to join up with the American 7th Fleet. And again we had our Commander-in-Chief on board for the trip. En route there we carried out a dawn bombardment at 0600, to try and damage a vital railway supply line, and we had a spotter aircraft provided by a U.S. Carrier. All was going well when to our surprise we got a message from the spotter to say "Hang about a few minutes, there's a thing I've got to do!" And

about ten minutes later he came up again with "Whoopee! I just saw a train coming out of a tunnel and went straight in to bomb it! It must have been an ammunition train, I guess, for it blew up with a giant explosion and brought down the tunnel entrance! Over to you again!" Our gunnery officer was angry at the improper conduct of his bombardment programme, but most of us felt the pilot had earned a few "Brownie Points" for his initiative and prompt action. And so on to Wonsan, which is about 70 miles north of the 38th parallel, where we joined up with the U.S. 7th Fleet. Wonsan is a very large bay about 12 miles across and some 5 miles deep. The main supply railway line runs along the coast here and not far away are a series of ammunition dumps and North Korean Army camps, so plenty of targets for our bombardments. These took place under way, in an operation known colloquially as the "Wonsan War Dance", where we all formed a circle and went round and round the bay bombarding as we went, and with our spotter aircraft working with us. It was not very exciting.

This War dance routine went on for three or four days, by which time we were heartily sick of it, and I felt sorry for the Americans who had to go on doing it over and over again!

Meanwhile we had a new Captain, Captain A.C.A.C. Duckworth RN (23 November 1951 – 26 November 1952) known, for some reason I never discovered, as "Bronnie". A very different proposition from Aubrey-Strawberry St. Clair-Ford, being reserved and serious most of the time, and it was a bit of a cultural shock to both officers and men to get used to him.

Only a few days later, still in Yokosuka, we had a visit by the Vice-President of the United States, Mr Alben W. Barkley, who was paying a flying visit to Japan, accompanied by two American Rear Admirals. He stayed with us only for a couple of hours and made no public appearance to the ship's company, but at least Admiral Scott-Moncrieff was able to tell him that the Royal Navy was pulling its weight in Korea!

So followed another trip up the West coast, which gave rise to an incident which woke us all up a bit. In the absence of an opposition from the enemy we had become rather casual about our habits when we were at Paengyong-Do, some six miles from the mainland, and

on this occasion were at anchor, with two destroyers in line ahead, between the island and the coast. On these occasions it was our custom to be at a lower state of readiness, what we called "Cruising Stations", so we had only a couple of guns manned, and very reduced Damage Control parties on watch, but at instant notice for steam. It was a Sunday afternoon and I was in fact lying on my bunk resting when I heard the sound of gunfire followed by an explosion on our starboard side further forward, and then "Action Stations" sounded. I rushed forward to find one of our lower messdecks had a large hole in the ship's side, the messdeck was on fire and several bodies lying about. By the time I had the fire out we had slipped our anchor cable and were steaming out of range of the shore battery which had been firing on us, but sadly, although there were very few men on the messdeck, two of them, both Chinese, were killed outright. Needless to say we changed our habitat.

Not long after this we were summoned by radio to enter the Han River estuary, just a little north of the 38th parallel, where it was reported there had been a skirmish between North and South forces, and that there were quite a few wounded on each side. We anchored about 1½ miles up the river, and received on board some twenty-five sailors, some from each side, in a collection of motley uniforms with no identification buttons, and as we had not had enough room for them in our sick bay, we converted the torpedo space on the upper deck centre line as a first aid station, trying, with the aid of an English speaking Korean, to separate the South from the North armies by putting them on opposite sides of the compartment with a few of our sailors as sentries between them. Some were quite badly wounded, indeed two or three of them died. We found it difficult to distinguish between the sides, but not so the Koreans themselves, who knew which was which, and in spite of their wounds tried at every opportunity to scramble over and attack one of their enemies. The sentries were kept quite busy keeping them apart.

We arrived in Hong Kong early in December 1951 and it was at once as though we were back in peacetime. The ever faithful "Jenny" and her side party girls were waiting to take our headrope to the flagship buoy.

By now a really cold winter was upon us, and in February we went up the West Coast of Korea where we ran into pack ice which got progressively worse the further north we went until there was ice as far as the eye could see. And when it rained or snowed, and it did both, the capstan and anchor cable were frozen solid and the guardrails had a mass of icicles hanging from them. It was no fun for gun's crews, lookouts or the watchkeepers on the open bridge, and we had to set up a permanent team, armed with chipping hammers, to keep the ice clear, partly to ensure the anchors were free of ice and could be let go in emergency, and also for fear we got top heavy and became unstable. Luckily the sea did not freeze solid, and we were able to steam around with care not to damage our propeller on the small bergs.

We had in company with us the Dutch destroyer "Piet Hein" who took a bump on her starboard side while fuelling, making quite a hole in the side above the waterline. It seemed she had not got the equipment to repair herself, so we took her alongside, cut out a hole about six feet square, and welded in a new patch. I still have photographs which show it was rather a neat job, and it was much appreciated by the Dutch… Not long after this we had the news that we were to be relieved by HMS "Birmingham", and I began a correspondence with her Commander to persuade him to take on from us our Wardroom Messman and his Chinese staff, our Chinese "dhobey" firm and, by no means least, our faithful Jenny and her "side party" girls.

But many years later, when we handed over Hong Kong to the Chinese on termination of our 99 year lease of the New Territories in the summer of 1997, someone proposed that "Jenny" whose real name was Mrs Ng Muk-Kah! be gazetted in the Honours List with the reward of the British Empire Medal (B.E.M.), in recognition of her service to the Royal Navy of over 60 years! There must be thousands of naval officers and ratings who remember her with affection and who, like me, were delighted that she should be so honoured.

On our return home, after about half an hour, we found Jill, aged not quite 8, obviously rather cross about something, and it turned out she had found a photograph of me surrounded by Jenny and her

side-party girls! She obviously did not really believe my explanation, and this had a sequel the next day at her school, for when her teacher asked her what I had been doing in Korea she replied "I don't know, but he had a party of girls on the side".

A final incident happened as I was leaving the ship by boat for the last time which gave me much pleasure. The sailor on the sternsheets of the boat said to me, apropos of nothing in particular, "You know Sir, when you joined us at Singapore we didn't know what to make of you, and we thought you might be a soft touch and pretty unpopular! But we found that you were not soft, but fair, and you learned our names and would talk to us when we met. May I tell you that you earned the respect and affection of most of us on the lower deck!" or words to that effect. This was probably the nicest moment of my time in "Belfast".

'Tiger' was Belfast's *mascot in the early 1950s.*

Alasdair Paton trained in HMS Belfast *as a Midshipman from 1 May 1951 to 7 May 1952, with three weeks' aircraft carrier experience in HMS* Glory *in early 1952. This extract sent by his wife, Joy Paton, is from his midshipman's journal and gives his impressions on joining one of the Royal Navy's 'big ships'; impressions from a different perspective from those recorded in the memoirs of his commander, Cdr Joseph Blackham.*

IMPORTANT NOTE.

This is a SECRET document during Hostilities. Instructions for the disposal of Journals are given in A.F.O 405/40 paragraph 2 and A.F.O. 1039/40.

S.519.— Revised, March , 1927

JOURNAL

FOR THE USE OF

MIDSHIPMEN.

Mr. ALASDAIR R. PATON

H.M.S. "BELFAST" FROM 1ST MAY 1951 TO

CAPTAIN SIR AUBREY ST CLAIR-FORD BART. DSO AND BAR, R.N. (left Friday 23rd November 1951)

H.M.S. "BELFAST" FROM TO 21ST FEBRUARY 1952

CAPTAIN A.C.A.C. DUCKWORTH DSO, DSC, R.N. (Joined Friday 23rd November 1951)

H.M.S. "GLORY" FROM 21ST FEBRUARY 1952 TO 4TH MARCH 1952

CAPTAIN COLOQUHOUN. DSO, R.N.

H.M.S. "BELFAST" FROM 4th MARCH 1952 TO 7th MAY 1952

Tuesday 29 May

I arrived at Singapore late this evening on board the troopship "DILWARA". There were three other midshipmen bound for H.M.S. "BELFAST" as well, and it was not until this evening that we learned from her new commander – Commander Blackham, who travelled out in the "DILWARA" that she was undergoing a refit at the naval dockyards on Singapore island.

Wednesday 30 May

The following morning we joined the ship. We were met by the sub. of the gunroom, Sub Lieutenant Berger. He introduced us to our 'nurse', Lieutenant-Commander Ogilvie, who gave us until the end of the week to get to know the ship. Berger conducted the initial tour

and then we were left to ourselves to explore the ship. With the aid of a much tattered and out of date blue print of the ship we soon began to get our bearings. Compared with the spacious new H.M.S. "DEVONSHIRE", the ship seemed to be cramped, a maze of small compartments and narrow passages altogether bewildering. This impression was heightened by the chaotic state caused by the refit. The funnels were being dipped and repainted, the superstructure was also being dipped and coated with zinc chromate. The turrets and 4" mountings were being treated in the same way. The top of A turret had been removed to facilitate the dismantling of the barrels and the replacement by new ones. The ship swarmed with Chinese and Indians.

Thursday 31st May

We were told our divisions and various duties. Chandler and I found that we were in Forecastle division, and we went to our part of the ship where we found the second captain of top, P.O. Hack. He showed us round the various lockers and wire stowages. The arrangement was much simpler than on "DEVONSHIRE", all wires and hawsers being kept together as much as possible, mostly on 'B' gun deck.

In the morning we were introduced to the Captain, Captain Sir Aubrey St Clair Ford Bart., D.S.O and bar R.N. He told us that he was glad that, except for our time in an aircraft carrier, we would be serving continuously in the "BELFAST", as that would mean uninterrupted training.

The ship was going into the King George VI dock at 0720 next morning, so in the afternoon we went across to the dock to see the preparations. The blocks were laid ready, and on the floor of the dock was marked with the stem and stern positions of the "BELFAST". It was interesting to note that the stern position of the French warship "Duguay Troin" was also marked down. The dock is the largest one East of Suez, and is capable of docking the Queens.

The blocks were laid in three rows. A long one to support the keel, with a space near the bows to allow for the asdic dome, and a small row either side to support the ship's waist.

Pylon-like structures were placed at intervals along what was going to be the starboard side. These held the blocks which kept the ship upright. The blocks on the port side were supported by the dock wall itself.

Saturday 2nd June

We still kept exploring the ship. Viewed from the boatdeck, the converted hangars have given the back of the bridge the appearance of a sheer precipice. I was struck by the smallness of the actual bridge, but I suppose the gun direction platform can be used for normal lookouts etc. It was rather a surprise to find messdecks on the bridge superstructure. I was also rather bewildered by the different number of radar sets.

HMS Belfast *returning to Portsmouth after service in Korea. Photo courtesy Morgan-Giles family.*

The battle of Changni-do

An example of Belfast*'s role in the Korean War was demonstrated in this article abstracted from HMS* Belfast*'s Commission Record in supporting the retaking of a strategically placed island off the west North Korean coast on 15 and 16 July 1952.*

Maybe the title is a bit ambitious: maybe it won't rank in the history books with Trafalgar or Bannockburn or the Field of the Cloth of Gold. But nevertheless it was quite a do, as you may remember.

There we were on the morning of the 15th, steaming along from the Haeju area to Taechong-do and, for once, quietly minding our own business, which was to oil from *Brown Ranger.*

Then suddenly—out of the blue, as the authors say—came the news that the island of Changni-do had been invaded by the enemy during the night.

We, along with *Amethyst*, immediately closed Changni-do; and then it started.

As we came in, we sighted a small boat idling a mile or so off shore, and promptly lowered the L.C.P. to investigate. The boat, we found, contained three South Koreans who during the night before had gone off on a reconnaissance of the mainland. When they returned, they had known from their reception from the beaches that these were not their life-long friends whom they had left on the island the night before. Their luck changed when we arrived to pick them up.

Having brought the boat in, Lt. Morris and his merry men pushed off again on a reconnaissance towards the island along with *Amethyst's* boat. As they nosed inshore they were met with machine-gun fire, and Marine Coffin was wounded. They returned the fire themselves with interest; but this was more than impertinence and we began to bombard—ourselves on the South side and *Amethyst* on the North. By this time, the USS *Bataan*'s strike aircraft were coming in under *Belfast*'s control, and between us all we gave the enemy a hot time of it.

Towards evening a battery on the mainland to the North began firing on *Amethyst*. While we were observing this with more than a little interest—another battery to the East began firing at US!

Indignantly, taking advantage of our larger guns, we got out of their probable range, and let them have it.

The conditions, the Gunnery Officer said, were almost ideal. There was an obliging green slope up to where the flashes were coming from, and our first ranging shot made a nice brown mark, showing exactly where the shell had landed. So the G.O. merely stepped up his shots to the flashes. Anyway they stopped firing.

Early in the morning of the 16th, the island was reinvaded by friendly forces and at daylight the fun started in earnest. Strike aircraft kept coming in, and between them and our guns, the enemy had more to contend with than their immediate opponents ashore. Our gunfire was, of course, magnificent; and so also, the aircraft reported, was *Amethyst*'s. This is worth mentioning since *Amethyst* was not, after all, up some river or another at the time.

The communications—probably the most important single factor in such an operation—between shore and ship and aircraft were excellent throughout, and made a considerable contribution to the success.

Slowly the enemy was driven back, any grouping for counter-attack being dispersed by the aircraft. It was important that the island be retaken before dark, so that in the event of another night invasion, the friendly forces would not be pressed on two sides. This was accomplished. As the light began to fade, the last remnants, battered by gunfire and bombs, were being mopped up on a hill at the Northern end of the island.

As far as we were immediately concerned, the heroes were the Gunnery Officer and his guns' crews, Marine Coffin our single casualty—oh! and having read the Editorial—the *Belfast* herself.

Tarcap

Graham (Oggie) Swanson was a Sea Fury Fleet Air Arm fighter pilot based on board the aircraft carrier HMS Ocean *working with HMS* Belfast. *His account, as this extract reveals, relates a mission incident that was focused around what was termed a 'Tarcap': an armed mission initially under the control of one of the fleet's vessels. They would spot for the ship's guns firing on their target – under and over, then bang on! Then they were released to find their own targets. But even flying on mission had its dangers.*

Just 13 days later I too was shot down during a similar TARCAP. The drill for these was that the leader would dive bomb or rocket from a sixty-degree dive. As he turned away the other aircraft would attack on a ninety degree heading to the leader's. Our target was a gun emplacement on the coast of North West of 'Wales'. Bob Hallam had bombed in a southerly direction then I attacked on an easterly. Pulling up at some 300 knots after releasing my bombs the cockpit filled with red-hot 'smoke.' With canopy jettisoned I just could not get out because of the slip stream. To get rid of speed rapidly I heaved back on the stick and turned towards the sea although I could not see the instruments. Still I could not get out. Then suddenly the aircraft went into a violent spin and I was thrown out! Finger nails were lost frantically grabbing for the handle across my tummy. The 'chute opened just before my feet splashed down. Still blinded I detached and inflated the dinghy. To board, this had to be rocked to and fro to fill a balancing pocket with water. This done my feet touched bottom! Seated behind enemy lines hoping for rescue, machine gunfire made me jump back in. It was an American Corsair giving me cover. A helicopter eventually found and deposited me on HMS *Belfast*. Nurses found third-degree burns on all skin not protected by flying overalls, helmet and gloves. I can still make out the scars on wrists, ankles, face and those three right-hand glove fingers which wore out starting engines. A couple of days later I was transferred to O*cean* by high-wire but I had missed those free drinks at follies night. Bob told me that my aircraft was on fire from nose to tail. The tail broke off and the fuselage span into the water as my 'chute opened. Probably the abnormal strain on a damaged fuselage by pulling up so violently caused this. It certainly gave me another life: more good thinking Oggie!

Tales from the Record of Commission

Various members of Belfast*'s company wrote small essays of their experiences on board for her* Record of Commission 1950–1952. *This is a selection.*

The extent of the UK's help in the Korean War can be gauged by these impressive statistics achieved during her commission, although

some are tongue in cheek!* To explain, 'Request Men' mentioned in the article are officially seen by the Captain standing at a desk usually in the Officer's Cabin Flat within the ship. The Rating, standing before him with cap removed, the Master-at-Arms and the Rating's Divisional Officer in attendance, can ask for welfare or leave considerations. A similar procedure is enacted for 'defaulters'; if a Rating is charged with disobeying orders.

We Steamed: 1950—10199 miles 1951—49534 miles 1952—37482 miles TOTAL—97035 miles
This represents an average speed of 5½ knots throughout the commission.
We ate and drank: Rum—56000 pints (½ million tots) Tea—10½ tons
Bread—250 tons Milk—208000 tins Potatoes—625 tons Meat—134 tons
We fired: 7816 rounds of 6-inch 538 rounds of 4-inch
No. of rounds fired at the radio controlled aircraft—Many.
We used: 1,000,000 sheets of signal paper: 150 miles of ticker-tape: 100 Ensigns: 200 Typewriter ribbons.
1 ocean of blood sweat and tears (The Communications Dept.)
We wrote: 8370 official letters.
The Captain saw: 1736 Request Men*.
We used 60000 tons of fuel and fuelled 96 times.
We had steam on main engines 455 days (1 yr. 3 mths. in 2 yrs. including Singapore).
An unknown voice said "P.C.O., telephone please!" 1936 times.
No. of aspirins consumed by the Captain's Secretary is confidential.
The Instructor Officer started 573 arguments and won 3.

Weather reports

The ship had her own meteorological officer, who was a 'Schoolie' or instructor officer, not just trained in education, but also in oceanography and meteorology. Weather reports were, of course, vital in war planning, but of interest to note is that a copy of the 'Climate Table of Korea, Climatological Standard Normals Part 1', published by the Central Meteorological Office, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 1968 and held by the

Meteorological Office, Exeter contains very little data for 1950–52, and also stated in the preface that no data from Pyongyang had been received since 1949.

The barometric pressure dropped to 924 millibars when Typhoon Ruth, category 4 with winds of up to 220km/h (140mph) hit Japan on 15 October, killing 1,294 people and destroying 34,000 buildings. The Australian aircraft carrier HMAS Sydney *lost four Sea Fury aircraft overboard. This account gives an idea of the* Belfast's *experience.*

Typhoon Ruth

On Saturday 13th October, while in Sasebo, we first became anxious about the lady called Ruth; and the Met Officer looked worried – all of him. By early Sunday morning it looked as if she was going to pass unpleasantly close, and along with the other ships we weighed anchor and made for the broad open spaces. On that morning, we sailed out in as gentle a wind and sea as ever was seen. But by the time we were only a little way out there was already a fresh breeze, and in little over an hour later almost a full gale and steep seas. That's the way it seems typhoons work – suddenly and if you're not on watch, unexpectedly: just like any other woman. We wanted to get as far west as possible, but just before 1600 we had to heave to so that 6-inch shells which had broken loose could be secured. I had wondered about certain rumblings and clankings coming from below me; but I was extremely grateful that I never knew what they were until afterwards.

The barometer kept on falling and the wind refused to back. That was ominous: it could mean that Ruth had changed to a more northerly course; making a dead set at us in other words. However at last the wind did back, and we breathed again. During the night *Belfast* and *Unicorn* remained within four miles of each other, with *Athabaskan* (Royal Canadian Navy tribal class destroyer) twelve miles to the north.

That night of the 14th October was quite a thing. The best solution was to heave to and ride it out, keeping the wind about 20 degrees on the starboard bow. An official document – always a masterpiece of understatement – refers to the seas as 'terrific'. The ship rolled up

to 35 degrees and the seas filled all the waists (on the upper deck, amidships) to a depth of three to four feet. Certainly to stand at the level of our Flag Deck and look at wave-crests higher than you are is a situation in which no one of God's children should ever want to find himself.

And the wind! If the wind in John Masefield's poem was, as he says, like a "whetted knife", this particular wind was all the swords, scimitars, daggers and stilettos that have ever been forged, cast, tempered and sharpened.

It struck me, and no doubt many others, just what a weak, puny and impotent thing we were in the face of this comparatively slight phenomenon of Nature.

The speed with which the typhoon hit us was only equalled in surprise by the speed with which it disappeared. Monday morning was warm and sunny; and the sea with no more than a medium swell. And the funnels were still there and the masts and the Bridge. I was quietly and secretly surprised.

We lost seven Carley floats and supports, and the Starboard Lower Boom. There were extensive electrical defects and the Capstan motor and Controller were flooded out. There was too a lot of damage to upper-deck fittings.

Of course a point for sober consideration is that we were never nearer than 100 miles to the centre of the typhoon. Now supposing Ruth had continued north towards us…

The Action Information Organisation (AIO)

The AIO is the nerve centre of the ship into which passes all the electronic information from radar, radio and other sources and where the tactical situation is presented to the Command on plotting tables and screens for them to make decisions as to how to conduct the battle. This extract from the Commission Book gives a typical idea of what happened.

To many people onboard, the Action Information Organisation (A.I.O.) was merely a voice blaring through a loudspeaker, to others it was just three letters; without their knowing what they stood for or what the organisation involved.

In many ways, it was one of the most important departments in the ship. Without it, we could never have operated quite so successfully in the confined waters off the West Coast of Korea nor could we have had the co-operation of the spotting aircraft, which made our bombardments so effective. Every ship that operated on the West Coast was either plotted or had some dealing with the A.I.O. Numerous aircraft were plotted, often as many as a hundred a day. On one occasion, even geese were plotted, but it was never established definitely whether they were friendly or enemy, although they were reported to be showing the correct identification code!

It may not have been realised by many that whilst the ship was operating in the Yellow Sea, we were constantly within the range of enemy bombers operating from the airfields in Northern Korea and Manchuria. For this reason, a Target Area Combat Air Patrol (Tarcap) was always supplied when the ship was in the Chodo area. Usually these aircraft came from the British or American Carrier operating off the West Coast, but frequently we had aircraft from the Fifth United States Airforce, the United States Marine Airwing and the South African Fighter/Bomber Squadron. The primary purpose of these aircraft was to provide air cover for the ships in the Chodo area, but they were also used to attack gun positions and enemy troops on the mainland and though you could not always see them, they were always in radio touch with the A.D.R. and available should enemy aircraft be detected.

All this work more often than not, was performed in semidarkness, often under trying conditions, so that if the R.P. ratings look like troglodytes after two years of continual operating, one must not he surprised.

Let it not be forgotten that a great deal of credit should go to the Electrical Department, who were responsible for keeping the radar and radio sets operating for lengthy periods under extremely difficult and trying conditions. Let us also remember that other departments contributed much towards helping the A.I.O. fulfil its role.

The Royals

The Royal Marines have been the Royal Navy's soldiers since 1755. They man one of the main 6in. guns on board and form the Royal Marine band to perform on ceremonial occasions such as the Monarch's birthday or 'Beat the Retreat' at formal 'Sunset', and provide a guard of honour for visiting dignitaries.

The ship has been very fortunate in having a very much alive and go-ahead R.M. Detachment throughout the commission. At top strength it consisted of 118, including officers and N.C.Os. The "Beating Retreat" ceremony has been performed on four occasions: at Singapore, Kure, Chinhae and Kobe; and the standard of arms drill and marching that one expects from the Corps was certainly maintained. There have been too, numerous Guards of Honour for visiting V.I.Ps. and senior officers.

Mention must be made of the Band which, under the able direction of Bandmaster Woods, has performed nobly: and not only the official military variety, but also the dance-band which "made" one or two functions.

In sport the detachment's record has been impressive. The Birmingham Cup (the Inter-R.M. Shooting Competition) has been won twice. The Inter-Part Soccer Cup has been won three times; and *"Belfast*'s" tug-o'-war team, which won the Naval Championship at Singapore, contained eight Marines.

In spite of naval nattering, which is an ancient Service custom, they've been a bunch worth having.

The Sick Bay

The Sick Bay on board was always busy and had more than just broken bones or venereal disease among their own ship's company to cope with, as there were injured from smaller ships and serious war injuries too. This account explains, with some humour, how they managed.

On one occasion early in the Commission, when the heat and the huge consumption of drinking water had driven the Engineers to turn off the supply, a dishevelled and sweaty face appeared around

the Sick Bay door and asked for two aspirin. With the usual Sick Bay courtesy he was given these but was refused a glass of water to swallow them with. He left the aspirin and departed, still thirsty. During the "Battle of Chang-ni do", when, the Sick Bay was strewn with stretchers and blood lay thick, a brave sailor penetrated past the notices on the Sick Bay door and again requested two aspirin. It is said that he avoids the Sick Bay these days.

Since the beginning of the Commission, eighteen thousand aspirin and eleven thousand codeine tablets have been issued; but besides the doling out of these, which takes place on almost all occasions and for many different reasons, the Sick Bay carries on the whole time with its other routine work. Queues for treatments, inoculations, vaccinations and examinations are a regular part of the life of the Ship and from time to time call forth caustic comments from the Heads of Departments. Working off the Korean Coast, away from any Hospital facilities, we have had to deal with both our own emergencies and those of smaller ships and the Islands. Signals to the Senior Medical Officer or the Dental Officer became quite common-place. Patients would come off to see us at odd times and for odd reasons. They would sneak across quietly from an oiler, be carried across to us in motor-boats or in sampans, and even on occasion be landed with great bally-hoo on the Quarter Deck in the helicopter.

The cases that came off seldom appeared to have much relation to the signals about them. The first case who arrived after an urgent signal and a difficult boat journey, turned out to have caught his finger in a door. Another case with a 'confirmed' diagnosis of acute appendicitis was seen at the first look to have an old appendix scar.

On the other hand there were also the ones who were carried on board with Death already at their elbows. One or two of them did die, but others with amazing toughness and stoicism struggled back to life: One of these was the Korean soldier who was brought off with wounds in his belly. For some reason that we never discovered he had tried toasting a grenade in a bonfire. In an operation that took two and a half hours, eight holes in his intestines were repaired and later he was shipped off to Inchon considerably the worse for wear.

However we heard a month after that he had recovered both from the grenade and the knife.

In all (including the Chang-ni do casualties, which kept the Sick Bay going continuously for twenty-four hours) we have had to deal with about thirty casualties from shore-side as well as doing five other emergency abdominal operations.

However no confusion did occur and from these sources we have managed to get through thirty-five and a half miles of bandage and five hundred and ninety-four pounds of cotton wool and lint. For those who like figures we have used 49,500 sulpha-tablets and 1,373,000,000 Units of penicillin.

Ode to the Oggin

The sailor's word for the sea is the 'oggin' and to demonstrate they are sensitive and poetical, and can be creative when off-watch at sea, here is a poem written by a member of the ship's company.

Have you seen the gray dark oggin just around The Nore?
Or the vivid violet oggin outside Singapore?
Have you seen the shot-silk oggin when the sun sinks in the Bay?
That's Kipling's flipping oggin where the flying fishes play.
Well, don't believe it, sailor! It's all a ruddy game.
It's all just ruddy oggin, and it's all the ruddy same!
You read about them hardy blokes who've nothing else to do
But sail the flipping oggin in a dinghy or canoe.
All around the world they'll go, and oggin all the way,
It's stupendous, it's terrific, it's adventure—so they say.
Well, don't believe it, sailor! Them blokes is flipping mad,
Oggin's ruddy oggin, and there's nothing quite as bad.
And then there are the Scientists—they shoot a pretty line
'Bout oggin rich as Croesus, like a flipping diamond mine.
"There's gold in that thar oggin, and pearls in the deep below."
Now that's a lie, if I ever heard, pearls come from Sasebo.
So don't believe it, sailor! Just keep on saying, "No!
Oggin's ruddy oggin, even when it's H_2O."
Pion.

Simple Japanese

R Adm Scott-Moncrieff hauled down his flag in Belfast *on 26 September when the Korean War ended, and* Belfast *was relieved on station by HMS* Birmingham, *and by* Newcastle *on patrol. As she set sail for the UK to pay off and end this commission, a helpful 'Simple Japanese' guide was produced for HMS* Birmingham*'s benefit!*

Japanese	English
Wassamattayou … …	Eager as I am to co-operate I do not quite understand.
Beero? … … … …	Is there but a remote possibility of alcoholic refreshment within these gracious portals?
Anone … … … …	Now look here, you listen to me and I don't want any god-damned argument.
	Note: Prefixes most Japanese statements.
Chotto matte … … …	Take it easy, Navy boy.
Nevvahappen … … …	You have definitely and decidedly been misinformed.
Scoshisodanoice … …	I am an Englishman.
Me sell fo' treefeetee nie ?	I'll really let you have it for a hundred.

Last words

HMS Belfast *paid off in Chatham on 4 November 1952 and entered reserve at Devonport on 1 December.*

If you look in the shipwrights' workshop on board HMS *Belfast* you'll see a toolbox with the initials C. J. W. on it. These are for Colin Jack White, my father. He served as the 'Chief Chippy' during the Korean

War. Sadly, my dad died in 2004 but before he did we assembled some of his HMS *Belfast* memorabilia and passed them on to the Association for posterity. Of note is dad's photo album, which contains some unique pictures taken in the Far East, including those of HMS *Amethyst* following the 'Yangtse Incident'.

Andy White BSc (Hons) MIET CENG MAPM

CHAPTER 4

Final commissions in the Far East

After some six years in reserve with an extensive refit incorporating the following changes, Belfast *recommissioned in Devonport on 12 May 1959 under the command of Capt J. V. Wilkinson DSO*, DSC, RN.*

New twin MK5 40 mm and twin 4-inch mount with individual MRS8 directors

4-inch guns training and elevation speed increased

Protection for key parts of the ship against nuclear, biological or chemical attack

Enlarging and enclosing her bridge with a two-tiered, five-sided superstructure (giving a striking change to her profile)

Improved accommodation and smaller crew

Tripod masts replaced with lattice masts

Timber decking replaced with steel throughout (apart from the quarterdeck)

HA armament - 6 twin Bofors guns and close-range fire direction linked to 8 close-range blind fire directors working with type 262 radar

Type 274 radar main armament direction

Type 277Q and 293Q radars (height-finding and surface warning)

Type 960M Radar (air warning)

Type 974 Radar (surface warning)

Torpedoes and associated gear taken out to save weight

HMS Belfast *arrived in Singapore on 16 December 1959, and spent most of 1960 at sea on exercise, although calling at ports in Hong Kong, Borneo, India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Australia, the Philippines and Japan.*

You look familiar—who are you? (W. R. Beard Contest, 1959)

Belfast *had often to embark a flag officer as the Far East Fleet Flagship. From 1958 to 1960 the commodore-in-charge, Hong Kong Naval Base, was Cdre David Gregory, a notable wartime submariner. His flag lieutenant was Tim Reeder. During this time* Belfast *would wear the flag of FO2, Far East Fleet, R Adm Varyl Begg. Writing today, Tim gives a strategic view looking back at his navy time in Hong Kong, albeit from the perspective of junior staff, with a flavour of life as a flag lieutenant in the colony, the formalities in vogue at that time, and his association with HMS* Belfast.

By the late 1950s the process of withdrawing from Empire to become the Commonwealth was well under way. The trade routes from Britain to the Far East had been marked by a string of Naval bases from Gibraltar, to Malta, Bombay (now Indian Navy), Trincomalee, Singapore and Hong Kong; or turning south to Sydney (RAN), and Wellington (RNZN). Hong Kong was a full dockyard with a "battleship-sized" dry dock able to handle repairs and refits to any ship in the fleet. The dockyard was being run down over several years. In 1959 the dry dock was filled in and many buildings were demolished. The naval base was named HMS

Tamar continuing the name of a venerable depot ship moored in HK harbour until she was sunk by the Japanese in 1941. HK was described by some as "a last cradle of colonial privilege" with pomp, protocol and ceremony for the civil, business and military administrations of the Crown Colony. It was a favourite "run ashore" for RN ships and a sought after R&R (Rest & Recreation) visit for American ships serving off Vietnam. *Belfast* led fleet visits, or her own single ship visits to Hong Kong. Gun salutes were fired, where appropriate, and formal calls were exchanged between ships and Commodore HK. Hospitality was offered to visiting senior naval officers and if required to any wives who needed to live ashore. Protocol demanded proper precedence at formal dinners and events. Flag Officers, whether ashore or afloat, had retinues led by a Flag Lieutenant, who took care of diaries, accommodation and messing for their Flag Officer.

Belfast made a visit to Hong Kong over Christmas 1959 wearing the flag of Rear Admiral Varyl Begg, who was entertained both formally and informally at Commodore House by the generous hosts David and Eve Gregory. Admiral Begg's family in UK had illness to deal with in his absence. The Gregorys gave all the help they could, as they did for many other visitors. Hospitality was returned by dinner on board *Belfast* for the Gregorys and their Flag Lieutenant.

ACCOMMODATING A FLAG OFFICER ON BOARD

While on the Far East Station, HMS Belfast *was the flagship for various flag officers. With an admiral embarked, the captain moved into smaller quarters and the admiral's staff needed their own bridge and use of the ship's operations room to conduct the affairs of the fleet. Below is an example of the duty staff officer's orders when R Adm Michael Le Fanu was Flag Officer Far East Fleet. He was to become First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff in August 1968 and appointed as Chief of Defence Staff, but died in 1968 before taking up the position. This example of the flag officer's orders for the duty staff officer at sea demonstrate the need for tact between the flag, who was commanding the*

fleet, and the captain, who commanded the ship, and that the one should not interfere (cross the bows) with the other.

Onboard H.M.S BELFAST
at Singapore

Office of the Flag Officer
Second-in-Command
Far East Station
23rd July, 1960

ORDERS FOR THE DUTY STAFF OFFICER
AT SEA

WHEN REQUIRED

1. At all times when the Flag is in company with two or more ships, a duty staff officer is required between sunset and 0800.

DUTIES

2. General. He is responsible to me through the Flag Captain for the safety of the forces as a whole both navigationally and for normal alterations to avoid shipping, bearing in mind the width of front covered by the Fleet and hazards to wing ships.
3. Place of Duty. He is free to move between the bridge, Admiral's bridge and Operations Room as circumstances dictate.
4. Calls. In addition to the orders the Captain may have in force, I wish to be called on the following occasions:-
   (a) For any alterations of course.
   (b) A change in the weather.
   (c) Any unusual occurrence.
   (d) Meeting of Foreign warships.
   (e) Ships joining or leaving the force.
5. I would far rather be called several times unnecessarily than miss some important occurrence.
6. When calling me always use the Admiral's voice pipe.
7. Signals. Although the S.O.(O) and Flag Lieutenant will be shaken for important signals, the duty staff officer, as the man on the spot, must initiate action on any immediate signals, consulting the Flag Captain and me, as appropriate. He is to

ensure that the S.O.(O) is informed as soon as circumstances permit.

8. He should decide whether signals should be shown to me, asking the S.O.(O) if in doubt.

IN HARBOUR

9. In harbour the Duty Commanding Officer assumes the duties of Duty Staff Officer and when the S.O.(O) or Flag Lieutenant are ashore initiates any action he thinks necessary through the Flag Captain and me as appropriate.
10. I wish to be informed whenever H.M. Ships leave or enter harbour.

GENERAL

11. Taking over Duty. The Duty Staff Officer is to inform the M.S.O when he takes over duty and be absolutely certain he is on the distribution of all operational signals.
12. Should the O.O.W. at sea or in harbour not be able to get in touch with either the S.O.(O). or the duty staff officer, he should make sure I am informed as in paragraph 4 above.

Signed M. le Fanu
REAR ADMIRAL

Distribution:
H.M.S. BELFAST
Flag Captain, Commander All D.C.O.'s All O.O.W.'s Flag Lieutenant S.O.(O). (10 Copies)
The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. ALBION. (20 Copies).
The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. BULWARK.(20 Copies)

CAPT MORGAN MORGAN-GILES' COMMISSION: 31 JANUARY 1961 TO 19 JUNE 1962

HMS Belfast*'s 1961 commission was officially begun with the commissioning warrant that was read out to the ship's company in Singapore by her new commanding officer, Capt Morgan-Giles, to*

formally mark the start of this commission, which included hoisting the White Ensign and a church service to bless the ship. This was the opportunity to lay out his strategy for what could be up to a two-and-a-half-year assignment.

By SIR JOHN DAVID LUCE Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Companion in the Distinguished Service Order, Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Admiral in Her Majesty's Fleet and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels employed and to be employed on the Far East Station.

H.M.S BELFAST – Recommissioning Order

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having directed that Her Majesty's Ship *Belfast* recommission at Singapore on 31st January, 1961, you are to proceed to recommission her accordingly and to prepare her for a Foreign Service Commission.

Until further notice Her Majesty's Ship *Belfast* will be administered by the Flag Officer Second-in-Command, Far East Station. You are to bring to the immediate notice of the Flag Officer Second-in-Command Far East Station any reason you may have for dissatisfaction with the state of training, discipline or welfare of the ship's company or with the general state of her material or any part of her.

May God's blessing be upon the ship and company hereby entrusted to your command, and may your joint endeavours to uphold the highest traditions of the Royal Navy in the service of Her Majesty the Queen be crowned with success and happiness.

Given under my hand at Her Majesty's Naval Base, Singapore, this 25th day of January, 1961.

J D Luce
Admiral

Captain M. C. Giles, D.S.O., O.B.E., G.M., Royal Navy
Her Majesty's Ship, *Belfast*

Copy to: The Flag Office, Second-in-Command, Far East Station

Frank Donald took this photograph of the ship in the King George VI dry dock in Singapore in October/November 1960. He was then a sub-lieutenant in the coastal minesweeper HMS Chawton. *He remembers watching her going astern out of the Stores Basin, which, because of her length, seemed to go on forever. His first visit to the ship, and introduction to the triple 6in. turrets, was at Devonport in September 1953 when she was being refitted to go into reserve. His godfather, Cdr J. C. Richards, DSC, RN, was then in command and had had a dual career as a pilot in the early Fleet Air Arm, and in minesweeping. On D-Day he was senior officer of the 6th Minesweeping Flotilla.*

Capt Morgan Morgan-Giles was Belfast's *Captain for her final foreign commission of 1961 and 1962. He was to retire as a rear admiral after a distinguished naval career during and after the war and to be elected as MP for Winchester. His full title was R Adm Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles DSO, OBE, GM and his family have kindly consented*

to the reprint of various excerpts that relate to his command of HMS Belfast *from his privately published book* The Unforgiving Minute *for circulation principally to his grandchildren and family. These anecdotes give an intriguing personal perspective into the life of those who served in her during this commission, and they typify the experiences of her various crews across the ship's 25-year sea-going life. They cover his captaincy of HMS* Belfast *and, in chapter 5, his steadfast achievement in getting her preserved as a Museum Ship for the Nation, moored in the Pool of London.*

So we now began an intensive work-up programme. A big exercise called "Jet 61" was due shortly and we had just three weeks in which to become a fully worked up and operational ship. I think it was actually on the first day we went to sea that there was an unscheduled piece of excitement when a Sea Vixen of the Fleet Air Arm was seen to crash into the sea about 10 miles away. As we increased to full speed the upper deck was crowded with anxious, staring eyes. An oil slick was spotted and a whaler was launched to pick up any available wreckage. There was no sign of the pilot and observer, but we were shortly joined by an RAF Shackleton and a naval helicopter and they were the first to spot the survivors. The observer was picked up by the helicopter and landed on our Quarterdeck. In the meantime we had reached the pilot who lay nonchalantly back in his rubber dinghy smoking his pipe. A sea boat was lowered to pick him up and both proved to be little worse for their ordeal. As they left the ship later that evening a cheerful voice was heard to say "Nice of you to have dropped in".

There were two aspects of life at sea which occupied much of our time and our thinking. The first was what was called "RAS", short for refuelling at sea. In the Pacific war with its long distances the US Navy had become expert at transfer of fuel from big ships to small ships. The way it was done was that the bigger ship, or an Auxiliary tanker, would steer a steady course and steady speed, while the receiving ship would come up alongside and take exact station about 100 ft on the beam of the supplying ship. Then lines would be shot across and oil hoses hauled in and connected so that the fuel

could be pumped across. Pumping took a long time, often an hour or two, so was a rather nerve-wracking experience for the Captain of the ship which had to keep exact station. If he steered too far out, even slightly so, or too far ahead he would break the hoses. If he steered too far in – bump! Getting into the exact position was tricky because there is an area on the quarter of any big ship which tends to suck you in – so the technique was to take station quite far out and then edge in. The steering and the endless minor changes of speed also called for great attention by the helmsman and in the Engine Room.

Once in position it is possible to transfer other things besides fuel. Heavy ropes as jackstays are put across, through a leading block and then manned by several dozen sailors (rather like a tug of war) so that the lines can be kept taut. Thus it becomes possible to sling across even heavy loads like ammunition and stores of every sort. Mail, written orders, fresh bread etc are also transferred and personnel including perhaps sick men who need to see a medical officer. This RAS operation was very frequently undertaken, either as an exercise or for necessity – and I have a note that it was done 283 times during our commission.

Incidentally this led to a custom which we adopted as a speciality for HMS *Belfast*. From Japan we bought 1,000 baseball caps with "HMS BELFAST" embroidered on them. The idea was that these would be convenient to wear during RAS exercises as they would not blow off like a sailor's ordinary round cap so easily does, and they gave some protection from the glare of the tropical sun. They were dark blue and rather smart and were also known as "RAS caps". This, as a special HMS *Belfast* gimmick, was a great success with the ship's company and eventually we always wore them at sea when not in company with the Fleet. But being strictly non-uniform, they were frowned on by one of our Admirals.

Another HMS *Belfast* speciality was a bathing net. We bought in Japan a large quantity of nylon fishing net. This was sewn up by the Petty Officer Sailmaker into the shape of a very large swimming pool. Lead weights were on the bottom corners, and corks along the top

edge. Two large booms were rigged up, about 30 ft long, hinged at the inner inboard end so they lay snugly along the ship's gunwale when not in use. During the dog-watches whenever possible we would stop for half an hour, push out the booms and the net – then one blast on the bugle and all sailors off duty could dive over the side and have a swim. At the same time we would lower a whaler with a man with a rifle in her as an additional shark patrol. Of course the swimming pool net had a bottom, so there was no real danger from sharks – although one has to take every precaution because it is a fact that whenever the sea temperature is 70 degrees or over there may be sharks.

This swimming net was an enormous advantage because conditions on board in the tropics could be extremely uncomfortable – especially for the Engine Room and Boiler Room crews. When the ship was modernised in 1955 only half the accommodation had been air-conditioned and not the other half. I must say that this net idea did a great deal for the health and morale of the ship's company.

HMS Belfast *leaving Singapore, 1961. Photo courtesy of Morgan-Giles family.*

At the end of 1961 Belfast, *after a refit in dry dock in Singapore, sailed to the Coral Sea area north-west of Queensland on 5 August to exercise with the Royal Australian Navy. Belfast was accompanied by RFA* Wave Master *in which Capt Morgan-Giles' eldest daughter Penelope and the wife of* Belfast's *commander, Cdr David Loram, took passage. The RFA captain over-rode instructions of the C-in-C Far East Fleet, as is recounted in this excerpt.*

There was a domestic incident because when my wife Pamela had flown back to Sydney she had to leave behind Penelope, aged 14, who had a severe cold and was not allowed to fly. With great difficulty I obtained from the C-in-C permission for her to take passage in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary *Wave Master* (a fleet support tanker), together with Fiona Loram, the delightful young wife of Commander Loram, but the C-in-C insisted that these girls were not to appear on deck during the voyage. However this restriction did not hamper Captain "Muddy" Waters of the *Wave Master*. As soon as we were clear of territorial waters he said "I give the orders in this ship. These girls can go on deck for sun and fresh air as much as they want". Every few days we would go close alongside *Wave Master* to exercise "refuelling at sea". When we did this we were able to haul across a telephone wire and have a chat with the girls.

Pamela Bushell was born in Sydney and had married Capt Morgan-Giles in 1946. When Belfast *visited Sydney in 1952 she was able to arrange a party for the entire ship's company, and this is described by her husband. It was extraordinarily generous of her and very much appreciated by those present.*

In Sydney, Australia Pamela had done a wonderful thing. She had arranged a ball at the Trocadero to which the whole ship's company had been invited. The ship's magazine said afterwards "We were greeted at Trocadero by an equal number of the belles of Sydney. A delicious hot chicken supper was served to everybody and altogether the evening was a triumphant success." Unknown to us the ship's company had bought a silver tea and coffee set and the tray was

inscribed with the words "Presented to Mrs Morgan-Giles by the ship's company of HMS *Belfast*, Sydney, Australia, September 1961". The youngest seaman on board (Ordinary Seaman Lambert) made the presentation. It happened that earlier in the day Admiral Frewen had arrived in Sydney by air and joined the ship. So the first event which occurred was this huge party, to which he was invited. He was a most austere man and seemed rather astonished by all this. One good moment was when Pamela was presented also with a RAS cap, which suited her very well on top of her evening dress. We took the opportunity, too, to present a specially embroidered RAS cap to the Admiral. I knew that he disapproved of them but nevertheless, for sheer politeness, he had to put it on!

HMS Belfast *sailed to Dar-es-Salaam for Tanganyika's (now Tanzania) Independence Ceremony on 19 December 1961, where the Duke of Edinburgh, representing the UK, attended.*

Two frigates, HMS *Rhyl* and HMS *Lock Alvie* sailed with us from Mombasa and we entered the harbour at Dar-es-Salaam at 0600 in the morning. Even at that early hour we were welcomed by crowds of Africans and Europeans.

During the morning of our arrival the Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Richard Turnbull, visited the ship and inspected a Royal Marine guard of honour. The Governor arrived in his full Diplomatic Corps uniform, very tight trousers and one of those white helmets with plumes of feathers on the top of it. Before following the Admiral down the steep ladder from the Quarterdeck he took off his helmet and put it on top of one of the ventilator outlets. A few minutes later I was pacing up and down the Quarterdeck, with my telescope under my arm, when out of the corner of my eye I spied Lt Robin Nelson, a cheerful but irreverent character, advancing with an egg in his hand to put under the feather helmet. I was just in time. Years later, Robin married a charming girl introduced to him by Pamela, and settled in Melbourne.

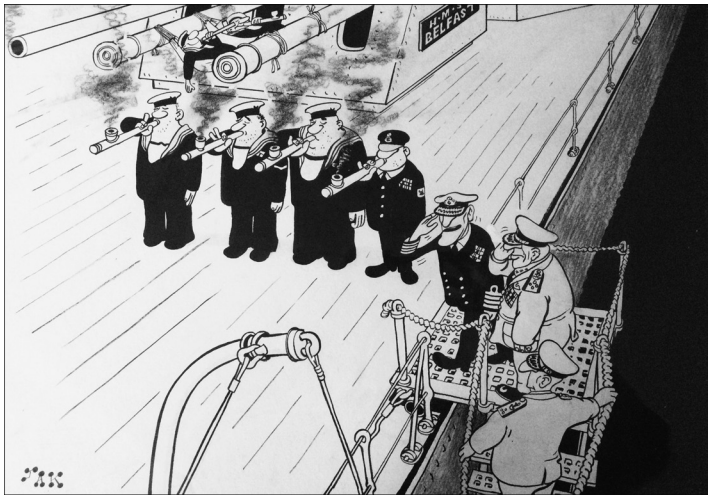
An example of how the Royal Navy gave positive help while on 'showing the flag' visits round the world was when David Watson (now 80

years old) was serving as an able seaman in HMS Belfast *at the time of Tanganyika's Independence. The Duke of Edinburgh came on board prior to the ceremony and attended the celebrations as the Queen's representative. David was asked to prepare and paint the new flag design on to a Zulu shield, which was made by the ship's 'chippy' (shipwright). The British Embassy had sent a cutting from the local newspaper, which formed the basis of the design, and, as noted on Daily Orders below for 15 June 1961 the shield was later presented to Burton Street Primary School in Dar-es-Salaam.*

We sailed from Pearl Harbour [sic] on Easter Sunday 22nd April and set off on the 2,100 mile passage to San Francisco. It was on this passage that one of the more difficult moments of the commission arose. We received information from Singapore and Hong Kong that we were probably being used to transport large quantities of heroin and opium from the Far East to America, and perhaps to England as well. From my previous experience in the Far East I had warned the ship's company that this might happen and told them to hand in to the Regulating Office (ship' police) anything that they had been asked to take to America or to England. This led to the discovery of a suitcase containing a massive quantity of heroin. This confirmed in no uncertain manner that we had drugs on board and we instituted a huge search. Searching a warship the size of *Belfast* is a formidable task. Smaller amounts of various drugs were found hidden in different places around the ship. Our main concern was that no illicit drugs whatsoever should be landed in the USA. Our second concern was that our leave should not be stopped during our time in San Francisco. Of course the ship might be put into isolation if the US authorities wanted to search her for themselves.

So I decided to send a signal to the Admiralty and request them to inform the United States authorities. This was done, and thus fortunately we avoided any criticism from the Americans. After all we had found the drugs for ourselves and we had made a clean breast of it, so to speak.

The head of the Federal Narcotics Bureau came on board and in my cabin he said "Say, Captain, I've been in this Department all



I can assure you Admiral, Belfast *is a very happy ship!*

my life and you have got a really big haul". Commander Loram had found that three Chinese cooks and stewards had been responsible for bringing the drugs on board and these three were already locked up in the ship's cells. In due course there was quite a lot of comment in the British newspapers about "drugs in British warship", but there was no adverse comment in the US press at all, as far as I am aware.

FIGURES FOR SPEECH

Capt Morgan Morgan-Giles believed very much in keeping his ship's company informed, and his supply commander on joining was, to his surprise, also appointed ship's information officer and told to produce regular bulletins about what was happening – to be broadcast to the sailors on board.

The Morgan-Giles family, looking through his papers, found this memo produced by the supply commander (responsible for victuals, spare-part stores, the captain's office and paperwork) for their captain's mid-commission speech to the ship's company; interesting figures today.

MINUTE SHEET
Subject:- FIGURES FOR CAPTAIN'S SPEECH
To: Captain
By: Cdr (S)

1. The following facts may be useful for your speech to the ship's company:-
   (a) Monthly wage bill – officers and men = £20,000
   (b) Monthly food allowance = £4,000
   (c) Cost of one ton of fuel = £7-1s-6d [old money = 7 pounds, 1 shilling and 6 pence]
   (d) One hour's consumption FFO = 5 tons at economical speed (4 boilers, 4 shafts)
   (e) Cost of a day's steaming = £849–0s–0d at economical speed
2. Regret I cannot calculate the consumption in monetary terms of stores nor the cost of maintenance which is allied to it, but these items may be worth mentioning.

27 June '61 (Signature)

RADIO AND RADAR-OPERATING REFERENCE LIST

In response to the increasing complexity of electromagnetic waves, this simple guide, found among the papers of Morgan-Giles, was prepared by the comms department for the officer of the watch on the bridge.

Band	Freq	Wave length	Use Radio Radar
Infra-red	3000 G$^{c}/_{s}$	0.1mm	
	900 G$^{c}/_{s}$	0.3mm	No radio or radar on these freqs
	3000 G$^{c}/_{s}$	1mm	"V" may be used in future for secure comms over a precise short range

	Band	Freq	Wave length	Use Radio Radar
EHF	V	75 Gc/s		
		60 Gc/s	5mm	
		50 Gc/s		
		40 Gc/s		Note 1 Gc/s (gigacycle) = 1,000 Mc/s
	Q	30 Gc/s	1cm	
		25 Gc/s	1.25cm	
SHF	K	18 Gc/s	1.65cm	Splash spotting - Radar
	J	11.5 Gc/s	2.6cm	
	X	10 Gc/s	3cm	High definition close range radar - Airborne radar
				GW radar 262. 978
	C	7.1 Gc/s		Submarine surface radar - USN surface search radar
		4.1 Gc/s	7cm	
UHF	S	3 Gc/s	10cm	Gunnery radar 274 277 293 (984)
		2.5 Gc/s		AEW radar
				W.S. and air directory sets
	L1	1 G c/s	25cm	USN and Dutch air warning sets
			30cm	
			50cm	Point to point tropospheric scatter
				Obsolescent gunnery radars
				Probable band for Colour Television

	Band	Freq	Wave length	Use Radio Radar
	L2	300 M c/s	1m	New freqs for close range tactical comms
VHF		214 M c/s		Small ships air radar warning Old freqs for close range tactical comms
		100 M c/s		Band 11 FM
		60 M c/s		
		50 M c/s		This band will be used for long range point to point comms using ionospheric scatter
		30 M c/s	10m	Long range naval communications including point to point ie fixed services
HF		3 M c/s	100m	
MF		300 K c/s	1km	Medium range "port or local" circuits Long and medium range navigational aids
LF		30 K c/s	10km	Submarine broadcasts Rugby
VLF		3 K c/s	100km	

MAINTAINING MORALE

Ship's company morale is a very high priority for any commanding officer, particularly in a 'big ship' with a complement of more than 800, and, as noted elsewhere, Belfast *was a very happy ship – and a happy ship is an efficient ship. Capt Morgan-Giles understood very well the need to keep wives, sweethearts and families at home supporting their menfolk while*

away overseas for long periods, and vice versa. His Christmas message shown here and sent to everyone reveals his concern.

From:- Captain Morgan Giles, D.S.O, O.B.E, G.M., Royal Navy
H.M.S BELFAST,
At sea
1st December 1961

This letter is intended as a Christmas message to the families and friends of the present Ship's Company of H.M.S. BELFAST. I hope that it will help to bridge the 9,000 mile gap between every man in the ship and his home when we are in Singapore on Christmas Day; and also help to explain to you something of the doings of H.M.S. BELFAST during her present commission in the Far East.

After only a couple of weeks to find out all about the different tasks onboard – "how the wheels go round", in fact – we took part in a large scale exercise called JET, held in the Indian Ocean. This is an annual affair in which all available British ships go off to do practices and manoeuvres with the Commonwealth Navies – in this case ships from Australia and New Zealand, Pakistan, Indian and Ceylon.

Ships are often at sea for several weeks at a time. This frequently makes it difficult to receive and despatch mail, although of course every opportunity is taken to send mail ashore by any ship which has to proceed into harbour for any reason. After spending Easter at Singapore, we went off for another large scale exercise with the American Navy, off the coast of North Borneo. Next came our first trip to Hong Kong – the 'Pearl of the Orient' – which is always the most popular visit of all.

The climate in Hong Kong, except in mid-summer, is cool and enjoyable. And this is of course a very pleasant change for the 700 men who live onboard in conditions which are usually terribly hot and sticky. Any warship is always crowded and difficult to ventilate; when H.M.S. BELFAST was modernised three years ago, a huge air-conditioning plant was installed, but even this is not powerful enough to look after more than a small proportion of the living accommodation.

Well, after Hong Kong the ship made a long cruise up to Japan, then back to Singapore for docking. During this time at Singapore anybody who wanted to go on leave for a week was able to do so. Due to this docking we missed being sent to KUWAIT – but it was a very near miss! Then afterwards we went "down under" to Australia – through the Great Barrier Reef, a week's exercising in the Coral Sea, and on to Melbourne and Sydney. Everybody onboard agreed that this Australian cruise was the highlight of the whole commission. It was certainly worth every day of the five weeks at sea (11,595 miles) to steam there and back. Also it was cool enough for us to have to change into blue uniform.

After returning from Australia, an exercise called FOTEX brought us sharply back to our senses. The guns were firing day and night, and every department in the ship was really flat out.

There followed a second visit to Hong Kong, the whole fleet being there to welcome Princess Alexandra during the Royal Visit to the Colony. Now we are on our way to represent the Royal Navy at the Tanganyika Independence Celebrations – which will be attended by the Duke of Edinburgh.

During these comparatively long trips at sea there is always a lot of work onboard, particularly for the Engine Room people, who are on watch at least eight hours every day. All departments are very busy cleaning and painting and generally smartening up the ship before the next port of call. I need hardly tell you that H.M.S. BELFAST is a most beautiful looking ship – perhaps the best looking ship in the Navy today. Being flagship of the Far East Fleet, our biggest fleet, she has to be outstandingly clean and smart.

At sea after working hours there are all sorts of games and competitions to keep people from getting bored! Deck hockey played on the quarter-deck; Rifle shooting; Radio quizzes; Nightly film shows; Concerts by the Royal Marine Band whenever they are with us; Bathing in a net over the side. The Chaplain holds regular services in the tiny ship's chapel, and there will be a carol service on Christmas Day. Perhaps the three most popular pursuits are (a) sleeping (b) eating (c) sunbathing. The facilities onboard for all these three things are quite excellent.

I think it is fair to say that BELFAST has an absolutely outstandingly good Ships Company this time – perhaps the best I have ever known. A sense of community soon builds up onboard if the Ships Company is a good one. A Welfare Committee is elected, and many worthwhile things are done by them. For example, the Ships Company have already subscribed £250 and bought a cottage for the resettlement of a refugee family (Chinese man and woman and eight children) from the poorest part of Hong Kong. Also a regular Raffle provides a guide dog for the Blind.

May I end with a personal request? It is natural that wives and families sometimes get down in the dumps when their menfolk are overseas. So of course do the menfolk. The greatest thing that you can all do from home to help us out here is to write cheerful and regular letters. "Mail ready for distribution" are the most exciting words heard over the ship's loudspeakers: please write cheerfully and look on the bright side of things – such as "Only six months to go!"

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year,
Yours sincerely
Morgan Giles
Captain RN

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

These two amusing anecdotes, one sent in by Charles Nixon-Eckersall, a retired submariner, and another by James Milne, a retired Royal Navy observer, demonstrate that junior officers found the then commander, David Loram, a stickler for cleanliness and a tiddly ship.

However, Loram's captain, later to become R Adm Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles, wrote very highly of his commander, so one must assume Loram's efficiency overcame his regard for protocol!

Submariner Charles Nixon-Eckersall recalls how HMS Belfast *was also a 'mother hen' for submarines in Singapore. This included HMS* Tactician, *who of necessity, being without her own ship's boat, needed a depot ship to berth alongside.*

In the early 60s HMS *Belfast* was the Far East Fleet flagship. *Tactician*, in which I was the 3rd hand, was one of the oldest submarines in the navy, un-air-conditioned and totally unsuited to service in the Far East. *Belfast* was known with great affection to the local Singapore submariners as 'Wave Belfast' because in the provision of victuals, stores, human support, etc, she was the best RFA/depot ship of all. Submarines, being boatless, used to tie up alongside her at fleet anchorages like Pulau Tioman for weekends of R&R. We were always very welcome with those in *Belfast*, with the possible exception of the Commander who disliked these ugly black things mooring bow-to-stern alongside his pristine quarterdeck. One evening after dinner in the cruiser's wardroom and enjoying coffee plus on the quarterdeck with some 'skimmer' mates, I was approached by said Commander who asked me what the boat's ship's company were doing. To my reply of not knowing, he invited me to the starboard after accommodation ladder platform from which one had a clear view of the submarine's fore-casing, on which were sat some 20 plus ratings. Oh, said I, they are watching a movie. He asked what they used as a screen and when I said his ship's side, he remarked that a grey ship side was unlikely to make a good screen. I assured him it was excellent as our guys would have painted a large white rectangle over the grey to act as the screen. I am afraid he lost it, demanding that the film was stopped and his ship's side repainted immediately. Subsequently, everyone except one thought that this spoof was well-meant and very poorly received. Our friendship with *Belfast* was not damaged at all.

Charles Nixon-Eckersall

In September/October 1961 I was serving in 825 Naval Air Squadron (Whirlwind 7s) onboard HMS VICTORIOUS.

However, my crewman was tasked to winch mail down to HMS *Belfast*, who was operating to the East of Singapore. I remember the transfer of mail went well, a friendly wave and we were off back to the Royal Naval Air Station, RNAS *Sembawang*, on Singapore Island. On arrival we were greeted by one of the Squadron 'wheels', who said that a signal had been received from

HMS BELFAST that stated we had managed to drop oil on the Quarterdeck during the mail transfer, and would the crew kindly help in removing said oil. Or words to that effect! I do not know what reply, if any, was sent.

Consequently when I visited the *Belfast* some years ago to see The White Ensign Association, I looked for oil patches on the Quarterdeck. Needless to say I was unable to find any trace!

James (Jim) Milne MBE
Lt Cdr RN (Rtd) former Observer

Peter Waddington was a newly promoted lieutenant when he joined HMS Belfast *in Singapore in January 1961. He recalls his impressions of the commission up to June 1962, partly reproduced here with his kind permission, as they give a vivid insight to the idiosyncrasies and unexpected demands of life on board. On Capt Morgan-Giles' recommendation Peter was selected to train as an RN clearance diving officer, i.e. a full-time diver.*

General Background.
The first of the Pre-Joining Training was a Shallow Water Diving Officer course at HMS *Vernon*. Shallow Water Breathing Apparatus (SWBA) was the oxygen only version of Clearance Diving Breathing Apparatus, this being marginally before the introduction of the Ships Diver qualification and the introduction of a compressed air set.

Gun training
The next course was the main one, at HMS *Excellent*, for training of *Belfast*'s 6" turret and 4" mounting crews. There I met up with some of the other officers and many of the gunnery ratings, and learned that as well as Diving Officer I was to be Quarterdeck Officer, X Turret Quarters Officer and Quarters Officer for the Port After 4" mounting, and therefore joined up with the future Quarterdeck Petty Officer and GI, Joe Lines, and many of my future Quarterdeck ratings for 6" and 4" gun drill.

Joining the ship
During January 1961 we were all flown out in batches to join the ship and settle in to our duties in preparation for the recommissioning ceremony, which took place at Singapore on 31 January. Daily work on the Quarterdeck consisted of keeping the ceremonial "Holy of Holies" looking pristine; i.e. polishing the brightwork, scrubbing the wooden deck and touching up paintwork, sloping the awning in inclement weather and re-spreading it when dry etc. Awning, stanchions, ridgeropes and backbone had to be stowed prior to going to sea, and re-rigged prior to entering harbour, and the ceremonial awning had also to be spread for special functions on the Quarterdeck. Towing aft, towing splash targets and preparing for helicopter landings were additional periodic evolutions for our part of ship, and, particularly prior to helicopter transfers or landings, required special precautions for protecting the deck.

For Diving, it being before the general introduction of wet suits, and too hot for our dry suits, we took to using our dark blue undersuits in order to present a dark profile. It was part of our diving training to be discouraged from splashing around on the surface, so that was not a problem. We were provided with shark repellent, in the form of small pouches of black dye to attach to the diving sets, but this stuff was extremely messy, and was soon abandoned. In the event we never encountered any sharks.

We dived at least once almost every time we stopped, either in harbour or at anchor, carrying out ship's bottom searches or other training or recreational dives everywhere between Dar es Salaam and Mombasa in the West to Japan, Australia and all points East on our homeward passage via the United States.

The Flag Officers. During our time on station, we were flagship to two successive Flag Officers Second in Command of the Far East Station (FO2FES). The first of these was the then Rear Admiral Michael Le Fanu (later to become FOME, and finally First Sea Lord).

He was, on the face of it, the more affable and less severe of the two. Amongst his apparent "peculiarities", he had the habit,

presumably carried over from old routine at BRNC Dartmouth, of taking a 15-minute daily nap on his bunk after lunch. In harbour in Singapore he would take off in his staff car in the afternoon, and go for a walk in South Johore, taking with him an apparently randomly selected junior rating as a walking companion. I can remember, if the rating was from one's own division, wondering what said rating was telling the Admiral about his Divisional Officer.

Admiral Le Fanu C-in-C Far East Fleet

The only other incident I can remember distinctly regarding Admiral Le Fanu involved me personally, on the Quarterdeck. We were getting ready for a ceremonial arrival in Hong Kong, and preparations had been held up by bad weather, so the Commander, David Loram, appeared on the Quarterdeck and instructed me to carry on working my hands during their dinner hour, to complete the rigging and spreading of the awning. This was received reasonably cheerfully, and the hands carried on working, but one of them came to me and pointed out that the rum ration had been issued, and that if their grog was not consumed in 20 minutes or so it would have gone flat and become undrinkable. He therefore asked if it could be brought up and drunk on deck while they were working. I thought this was a reasonable request, and gave permission. However, no sooner had the grog been produced than the Admiral appeared to take his lunchtime exercise. While pacing the Quarterdeck, he noticed the rum and asked me what was going on. I explained the circumstances, and was given a relatively mild telling off for allowing drinking on deck. The Admiral then sent for the Commander, and somewhat to my embarrassment gave him a considerable and audible "roasting" in front of my ratings, not about the rum, but for keeping the hands working through their meal time. Admiral Le Fanu was, of course, later instrumental, as First Sea Lord, in abolishing the rum ration as being an anachronism and incompatible with the requirement for personnel to handle modern weapons and machinery. I have sometimes wondered whether this incident had any bearing on his subsequent action.

Rear Admiral Le Fanu's successor, Rear Admiral John (aka "Black Jack") Frewen, was a completely different character. Severe in

expression and thin to the point of appearing gaunt, we were given early in his time with us to understand that he had ulcer problems. Indeed, not long after he joined us he visited the US Navy, and they made the mistake of catapulting him off a carrier deck, by way of giving him a "show". This severely aggravated his medical problem. We bridge watchkeepers were told to virtually tiptoe past his cabin door on the way on and off watch to avoid disturbing him. I only once witnessed him actually venting his wrath. This was on the Quarterdeck. The booms and ladders went out as required, but the electricians in the Port waist mistook the bugler sounding the 'G' for the "Carry on" signalling the end of the ceremonial, flung a screen door open and charged down the deck, bearing their floodlighting booms like lances, and narrowly missing "Black Jack", who instantly illustrated the background to his nickname by calling for the Commander, standing inches in front of his face and bawling in front of everyone words to the effect of "If I ever witness anything like this again I will personally ensure that you go no further in the service".

Most of my bridge watches and my Quarterdeck watches in harbour were reasonably uneventful. The harbour watch incident was again a middle watch. We were alongside in the US naval base at Subic Bay, and had given shore leave to Olongapo, a notorious night spot where leave to the US sailors expired at 0200, and it had been decided that we, as visitors, would have to follow suit. Our sailors, however, were accustomed to having all night leave, and many of them, with a few drinks inside them, had either forgotten the expiry time or decided to ignore it, so at 0200 there were something like 100 ratings still ashore. For a short while I decided to turn a blind eye, as ratings were drifting back a few at a time. By about 0215, when there were still about 30 people missing, I started retaining Station Cards.

I had already put returning drunks in the two cells under supervision, and used the ship's handcuffs to shackle others to various parts of the forepeak outside the cells when I considered they were too far gone to be allowed on the messdecks. I had also sent ashore to the US Shore Patrol to borrow more handcuffs. At

about 0230, one junior rating from my own division, whose card had been retained because he was adrift but whom I had sent below, having not recognised him as being drunk, appeared on deck in his underpants and came after me with a large galley knife. He was intercepted by the gangway staff and locked up with the others, happily not having harmed anyone. The upshot of this was that I spent several hours on each of several days attending Commander's defaulters and then Captain's defaulters. My Able Seaman came and apologised profusely the next day, but was sentenced to detention, and despite his apology and my statement that I was willing to let him back, the Captain deemed it wise to move him to a different division.

Gunnery.
We carried out a number of 6" and 4" firings, but the only firing of note that I remember was the single occasion on which we fired a 12 gun 6" broadside. We had usually fired salvoes, one barrel at a time, which had little noticeable effect on the ship, but on this occasion, firing 12 barrels simultaneously and more-or-less on the beam, the ship appeared to take a considerable leap sideways, and I seem to remember the electricians spending many hours replacing virtually every lightbulb in the ship.

Torpedo and Anti-Submarine duties. My sonar duties were limited to ensuring that the limited number of sonar ratings on board operated the sonar periodically with identification and classification tapes running, so that they could practise properly detecting and classifying submarine-like contacts. With that in mind, I remember on one occasion making a broadcast saying "UCs muster in the ACR for IDCT", knowing full well that the ratings concerned would understand the instruction.

However, the Commander had a thing about people using acronyms and sent for me, asked "What the hell was that all about?" He then told me to spell things out in future.

The Commander. While on the subject, I will mention that Commander David Anning Loram MVO, Royal Navy was not popular as the ship's

Commander. He was a hard taskmaster, but I think the main reason for his unpopularity, particularly amongst the Part of Ship officers, was that he appeared not to be able or willing to let people get on with their job without perpetual interference. On the other hand, socially and when off duty, he was friendly and charming. I took a few days' local leave on one occasion when the ship was in Singapore, and went up to Kuala Lumpur to stay with some friends. I had a full beard when I joined the ship, but while ashore I decided to become clean shaven. On my return, walking up the gangway in civilian clothes and saluting, I was greeted by the Commander, who happened to be on the Quarterdeck, and was treated like a welcome visitor (until I pointed out that I was one of his officers and had been so for half a year or so).

The Passage Home.

The passage, via Guam, Honolulu, San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver, Victoria, Panama Canal, and Trinidad, combined with our time on station between Dar es Salaam and Mombasa in the West and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), India, the Maldives, Singapore,

HMS Belfast *coming alongside in Portsmouth Harbour on completion of her 1961–62 commission. Families are waiting on board the bow of an RN aircraft carrier.*

Hong Kong, Borneo, the Philippines, Japan in the North and Australia in the South turned the 18 month commission as a whole into a magnificent world tour. Our reception on the way home, particularly on the West coasts of the USA and Canada, was quite extraordinary, with people travelling many miles to attend receptions on board, and many hundreds queuing to invite British sailors to visit their homes, and to attend dinners, dances and parties ashore. In San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver there was a "Lurk List" in the wardroom, requiring off-duty officers to attend one or more reception/dinner/dance ashore per night until they had a duty night on board or reached the bottom of the list, having attended a specified "quota" of events. It became a relief to get to sea for the relatively short passages between ports.

The last twelve gun salvo from a Royal Navy warship

I served as a Helicopter Pilot in the Fleet Air Arm in the 1960s. On the 18th September 1962 I was tasked to fly an HAS Whirlwind Mk VII of 771 Squadron (No:- 753) with a Naval Photographer to photograph the last 12 Gun Salvo fired by HMS *Belfast* just south of Portland. I believe that this was the last 12 gun salvo fired by the Royal Navy, quite a sight and I am glad they were blanks!

Lieutenant Don Macdonald RN

Chapter 5

Life in the Reserve Fleet

In July 1963 HMS Belfast *was called out of the Reserve Fleet to conduct a Royal Naval Reserve minesweeping exercise involving 16 RNR minesweepers and manned with a Royal Naval Reserve crew and sea cadets embarked. This was called Exercise* Rockhaul.

Capt Sir Norman Lloyd-Edwards KCVO, GCStJ, JP, RNR, serving in the RNR, was captain's secretary to the admiral commanding reserves and he remembers an experience.

In 1963 Rear (later Vice) Admiral Hugh Martell, as Admiral Commanding Reserves, had the brilliant idea to take HMS *Belfast* out of the Reserve Fleet to act as "mother hen" to the eleven Minesweepers attached to the RNR Divisions throughout UK on an expedition to Gibraltar. The purpose was to give an added impulse and excitement to the RNR when carrying out their 14 day annual training.

The Ship's Company consisted of RN officers and ratings with a good smattering of RNR and I was lucky as a two ringer RNR to be selected as Captain's Secretary. It meant joining her a week earlier than the rest to help establish a working ship. My cabin was just below the Bridge and is now designated that of a Royal Marine Officer. To add to the excitement 100 Sea Cadets were to be borne.

We sailed from Portsmouth in August with the MS's in line ahead into a heavy swell. I felt very smug standing on BELFAST's Quarter Deck watching the others pitching and rolling. On the way, there were the usual manoeuvres and trials. One evening I was on the Quarter Deck taking my post-prandial coffee when suddenly the deck dropped from under me and the ship's propellers zipped our speed from 8 knots to her fullest of 30 knots. The lookout had spotted a blaze on the horizon. We tore through the lane of MS, who

pitched in her wake and got to a Spanish fishing vessel on fire. All the crew were rescued but their ship sank.

On arrival at Gib, the cadets were put to work with pulling races and runs to the top of the Rock to make them too tired to get up to any mischief. The rest enjoyed being in tropical rig for the first time with runs ashore, where they were able to sample delicacies like swordfish and buy Arabic souvenirs to take home. Many had never been abroad before so it was a case of "Join the Navy to see the World".

One evening I was Officer of the Day and on watch during the Middle. The Admiral had gone ashore with some of his Staff and on his return he handed me a piece of paper with the order to deliver it immediately to his Chief of Staff. His bright eyes and unsteady walk caused me to read the note. It said "get stuffed". I therefore decided to postpone its delivery as I knew the COS had retired. The next morning during breakfast I heard the pipe: "Captain's Secretary to the Admiral's Cabin at the rush." I was asked why I had not delivered the message. I handed it to the COS who promptly said "you did the right thing" to the huge amusement of the rest of the Staff.

Hugh Martell's obituary in the *Independent* referred to this Exercise as being one which amazed our NATO allies that it had been carried out by Reservists in the main.

The voyage home was uneventful but the success of the venture was deemed so effective that there were a number of other Rockhauls in later years but sadly without the comforting presence of BELFAST.

In 1971 HMS Belfast *was saved for the Nation as a Museum Ship. R Adm Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles wrote how this was achieved.*

HMS *Belfast* had been lying in Portsmouth for seven or eight years as the Headquarters ship and "living ship" for the Reserve Fleet. In this capacity she was permanently at anchor and not in full commission. The threat of scrapping this famous old ship and the proposal to save her attracted a lot of attention, both in the Navy and in the National Press.

An "early day motion" was tabled in the House of Commons proposing that the ship should be saved from scrapping and preserved as part of the Nation's Maritime heritage.

A couple of days later, Mr John Smith, the MP for Westminster and the City of London, spoke to me about it. He had been in the Navy during the war, a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm and was very keen on the project. He promised to make a very large sum of money available to Prince Philip's Maritime Trust, specifically earmarked for HMS *Belfast*.

My fellow Trustees were:

Dr Noble Frankland, CB, CBE, DFC
Sir Peter Masefield
Lord Dalkeith MP (now the Duke of Buccleuch)
Mr Gordon Strang, a skilled Accountant
Mr Aubrey Bowden
Sir Arthur Drew, KCB (of the Standing Commission in Museums and Galleries.

As Executive Director of the Trust we had recruited the recently retired Admiral Sir Donald Gibson.

On 15th October 1971 she was towed up from Tilbury, under Tower Bridge, and into her berth.

Finally, HMS *Belfast* was opened to visitors on Trafalgar Day, 21st October, 1971.We found that the public was particularly interested in the conditions under which the ship's companies lived on board in wartime.

At this stage the ship was a private enterprise venture entirely run by the HMS Belfast Trust. We received a great deal of help and encouragement. The First Sea Lord of the day, with some misgivings (!) handed over a White Ensign which we were allowed to use. To commemorate the ship's part in the Normandy Landings on D-Day, the ship was visited by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

HMS *Belfast* has always been a good ship for a party… The proceeds of catering were very profitable for the Trust. HMS *Belfast* remained under the control of the original Trustees until 1978. Our income was sufficient to pay the salary of the Director and his staff, the wages of the Wardens, and to keep the ship clean. However it became apparent that we would not be able to put enough money into reserve for the eventual dry-docking.

So, in March 1978, the ownership of HMS *Belfast* was transferred to the Imperial War Museum.

HMS *Belfast* is now one of the three out-stations of the Imperial War Museum, the others being the airfield at Duxford (near Cambridge) and the War Cabinet Room.

In the Coronation Jubilee Year, the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Sir Robin Gillet, had arranged an exhibition of marine paintings in the library of the Guildhall. The Lord Mayor was also a Commander RNR and the pictures had all been painted by John Hamilton, a famous marine artist [who] agreed to sell them to the HMS Belfast Trust for £30,000 if we kept them on permanent display on the ship.

As part of the original arrangements with the Port of London Authority, HMS *Belfast* is the berth used for visiting Warships or Cruise Liners to lie alongside when they visit the Pool of London.

The then Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor James Stewart, with Rear Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles at the ceremony for the handing back of the bell aboard HMS Belfast *on 21 October 1977.*

NEW MASTS FOR HMS *BELFAST*

Richard Thorne wrote this article to explain how Belfast*'s original rusting masts were replaced. He retired from the Royal Navy in 1989 as a commander (marine engineering), having served on board her in 1961 as a sub-lieutenant under training. He is now a committee member of the HMS* Belfast *Association.*

It was the 15th August 2005. Two men, one of them Brad King, the then Imperial War Museum's Director of HMS *Belfast*, the other, one of three HMS Belfast Association's Vice Presidents – Tim Lewin – were discussing the parlous state of the ship's masts.

It was Tim who suggested that an approach should be made to the Russians asking them to sponsor the supply of new masts. At that time the Russian steel industry was prospering and Tim was fully aware of the great fund of goodwill that exists on the Russian side for the one remaining ship to have taken part in the Arctic convoys in the 2nd Word War. Tim also has close links with people in very high places in Russia and so he agreed to make the necessary initial contacts!

Thus was born the "Last Witness Project", the aim of which was to replace the two badly corroded masts with new ones.

Lattice Mast Corrosion 2005

As an aside: over the course of the period 1941 to 1945 some 78 convoys ran the gauntlet to Archangel, or Murmansk, in northern Russia carrying, in all, four million tons of supplies, which included some 7,000 aircraft and 5,000 tanks. The convoy route passed between the Arctic ice pack and the coast of Norway and was very, very dangerous because of the proximity of German submarines and aircraft from their bases in occupied Norway; this was especially the case in winter when the ice came further south, indeed, more ships were lost to the ice than to the enemy. The price was heavy with some 100 merchant and 19 RN ships sunk and the loss of almost 3,000 seamen.

The Arctic convoys were absolutely critical to the Russian fight against the invading Germans and their eventual victory and, among the RN ships defending the convoys, was HMS *Belfast* whose Battle Honours include: "Arctic 1943" and "North Cape 1943".

As a further aside: although a ship's masts certainly add to the aesthetic appearance of a warship, such as HMS *Belfast*, they also carry, among other fittings, an array of radar aerials as high as possible in the ship. The new long range search radar fitted during her 26 month refit in Devonport, which completed in November 1942, proved to be crucially effective in locating, shadowing and, subsequently, the sinking of the "Scharnhorst" in the Battle of North Cape in December 1943. Through the Russian Federation, around £1,000,000 was donated by Russian companies for *Belfast's* new masts. The masts were dedicated in the presence of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh and Russian representatives on 19 October 2019.

Finally a tribute to R Adm Sir Morgan C. Morgan-Giles DSO, OBE, GM, who did so much to preserve HMS Belfast *as a Museum Ship and who chaired HMS Belfast Trust. It was placed in the summer 2013 edition of HMS Belfast Association's newsletter The Sea Horse.*

Members of the Association, particularly those who served in HMS BELFAST during the 1961–62 Commission when Captain Morgan-Giles was in command, will be saddened to learn that our Patron crossed the bar on Saturday 4 May 2013, aged 98 years. There are many tributes to Sir Morgan-Giles where he is described as "a highly decorated naval officer who became a colourful Conservative MP for Winchester".

He took his seat on the Commons back benches in 1964 and very quickly earned a reputation for his forthright approach to parliamentary business and was frequently greeted by affectionate Labour cries of "send a gunboat" as the genial Morgan-Giles duly steamed into action with all guns blazing on behalf of his beloved service. It was from the floor of the House of Commons that Sir Morgan-Giles proposed to save HMS BELFAST for the nation. He was successful in his bid to have the ship taken off the Disposal List and, having raised a considerable sum of money, became the Chairman of the HMS BELFAST Trust. He was on the bridge when the ship passed under Tower Bridge and moored at her current berth on the River Thames.

Rear Admiral Sir Morgan-Giles was born on 19th June 1914. He joined the Royal Navy in 1932 and while serving in the training cruiser

Frobisher, visited the West Indies and the Baltic. He then served in a number of ships on the China Station before qualifying as a TAS Officer at HMS VERNON, where later in his career he commanded the establishment in the rank of Captain. Early in the Second World War, Lieutenant Morgan-Giles coordinated mine disposal work in the Suez Canal, and during the six months siege of Tobruk, he laid mines and landed troops to undertake fighting patrols. During this period, he received the George Medal.

While in Cairo, Lieutenant Morgan-Giles met Brigadier Fitzroy MacLean who was liaising with Tito and his partisans in Yugoslavia. Following this meeting, Lieutenant Morgan-Giles delivered arms and supplies to the partisans from Bari in Italy to the island of Vis in the Adriatic, as well as coordinating the commando raids carried out by coastal forces along the Dalmatian coast. After the war, he served in staff appointments in the Far East, in Trieste, then as the CO of HMS CHIEFTAIN of the Dartmouth Training Squadron, and then as Captain of HMS BELFAST. On promotion to Rear Admiral, he became Admiral President of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, before retiring from the Royal Navy. His career as an MP was equally challenging, but that is another story!

However the honours and awards earned by him during his lifetime are:

The George Medal – 2nd September 1941
Member of the British Empire – 1st January 1944
Officer of the British Empire – 11th July 1944
Distinguished Service Order – 24th April 1945
Knight Bachelor – 1975

Rear Admiral Sir Morgan C. Morgan-Giles DSO OBE GM 19 June 1914 to 4 May 2013 age 98

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Glossary of Abbreviations

PERSONNEL

AB	Able Seaman
AF	Admiral of the Fleet
AS	Admiral Superintendent (of Rosyth Naval Base)
CD	Captain of the Dockyard
C-in-C Rosyth	Commander-in-Chief, Rosyth Naval Base (1939 – 1943 Rear-Admiral)
D4	Captain of 4th Destroyer Squadron
DCO	Duty Commanding Officer
DNC	Director Naval Construction
GO	Gunnery Officer
MS	Minesweeper
OOW	Officer of the Watch
PCO	Principal Control Officer
PO	Petty Officer
RN	Royal Navy
RNR	Royal Naval Reserve
RP Rating	Radar Plotter
Snotty	Midshipman
S.O.(O).	Staff Officer (Operations)
V Adm	Vice Admiral

ORDERS, DECORATIONS AND MEDALS

CB	Companion, The Most Honourable Order of the Bath
CBE	Commander of The Order of the British Empire
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
DL	Deputy Lieutenant (of a county)
GCB	Knight Grand Cross, The Most Honourable Order of the Bath
GCStJ	Bailiff Grand Cross of the Order of St John
JP	Justice of the Peace
KCVO	Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order
KG	Knight of The Most Noble Order of the Garter
LVO	Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order
OBE	Officer of The Order of the British Empire

FUNCTIONS/DEPARTMENTS

ADR	Aircraft Direction Room
AIO	Action Information Organisation
Cwt	Hundredweight (long or imperial hundredweight of 8 stone (112 lb or 50.802345 kg): 20 hundredweight = 1 ton, a long (UK/Imperial) ton of 2240 lb.
ER	Engine Room
FFO	Furnace Fuel Oil
MSO	Main Signal Office
r.p.m.	Revolutions per Minute

SIGNALS

PL	Plain Language (in regard to signalling lamp messages)
TOD	Time of Despatch (for signal)
TOR	Time of Receipt

UPPER DECK

Boat's Falls	Ropes to hoist boats inboard the ship
Capstan	Machinery to wind in the anchor cable
Carley Floats	Life-saving equipment
Gunwale	The top edge along the boat or ship's side
Paravane	a towed, winged (hydrofoiled) underwater object; like a water kite
RAS	Replenishment at Sea
RFA	Royal Fleet Auxiliary
RNSA	Royal Naval Sailing Association
Scupper	Gutters to take sea water down ship's side

NAVIGATION & SURFACE/AIR DEFENCE

AA	Anti-aircraft
Arctic Convoys	JW – Outward from Iceland, usually off Hvalfjörður north of Jan Mayen Island to Arkhangelsk or Murmansk. From February 1942 from Loch Ewe, Scotland RA – Inward back to Iceland and then Loch Ewe
ARL table	Admiralty Research laboratory to compute position etc
AWL	Above the Waterline
DCT	Director Control Tower
D/F	Direction Finding
GDP	Gun Direction Platform
HA	High Altitude
IFF	Identification Friend or Foe
MLA	In navigation; Mean Line of Advance
W/T	Wireless Telegraphy

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